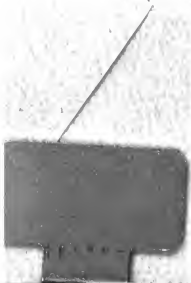
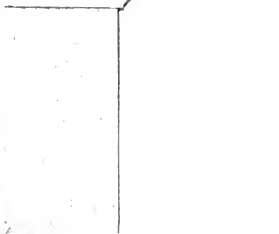


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ITALY.

Sketches,

BY

WILLIAM BECKFORD,

ESQ.



PARIS. — LYONS.

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ITALY.

LETTER I.

Bolsano.—Indications of approaching Italy.—Fire-flies.—Appearance of the Peasantry.—A forest Lake.—Arrive at Borgo di Volsugano.—Prospect of Hills in the Venetian State.—Gorgeous Flies.—Fortress of Covalo.—Leave the country of crags and precipices, and enter the territory of the Bassanese.—Groves of olives and vines.—Classic appearance of Bassano.—Happy groups.—Pachierotti, the celebrated singer.—Anecdote of him.

July 29, 1780.

We proceeded over fertile mountains to Bolsano. It was here first that I noticed the rocks cut into terraces, thick set with melons and Indian corn; fig-trees and pomegranates hanging over garden walls, clustered with fruit. In the evening we perceived several further indications of approaching Italy; and after sun-set the Adige, rolling its full tide between precipices, which looked terrific in the dusk. Myriads of fire-flies sparkled amongst the shrubs on the bank. I traced the course of these exotic insects by their blue light, now rising to the summits of the trees, now sinking to the ground, and associating with vulgar glow-worms. We had opportunities enough to remark their progress, since we travelled all night; such being my impatience to reach the promised land!

Morning dawned just as we saw Trent dimly before us. I slept a few hours, then set out again (July 30th), after the heats were in some measure abated, and leaving Bergine, where the peasants were feasting before their doors, in their holiday dresses; with red pinks stuck in their ears instead of rings, and their necks surrounded with coral of the same colour, we came through a woody valley to the banks of a lake, filled with the purest and most transpa-

rent water; which loses itself in shady creeks, amongst hills entirely covered with shrubs and verdure.

The shores present one continual thicket, interspersed with knots of larches and slender almonds, starting from the underwood. A cornice of rock runs round the whole, except where the trees descend to the very brink, and dip their boughs in the water.

It was six o'clock when I caught the sight of this unsuspected lake, and the evening-shadows stretched nearly across it. Gaining a very rapid ascent, we looked down upon its placid bosom, and saw several airy peaks rising above tufted foliage. I quitted the contemplation of them with regret, and, in a few hours, arrived at Borgo di Volsugano; the scene of the lake still present before the eye of my fancy.

July 31st. — My heart beat quick when I saw some hills, not very distant, which I was told lay in the Venetian State, and I thought an age, at least, had elapsed before we were passing their base. The road was never formed to delight an impatient traveller, loose pebbles and rolling stones render it, in the highest degree, tedious and jolting. I should not have spared my execrations, had it not traversed a picturesque valley; overgrown with juniper, and strewed with fragments of rock, precipitated, long since, from the surrounding eminences, blooming with cyclamens.

I clambered up several of these crags,

Fra gli odoriferi ginepri, *

to gather the flowers I have just mentioned, and found them deliciously scented. *Fratillarias*, and the most gorgeous flies, many of which I here noticed for the first time, were fluttering about and expanding their wings to the sun. There is no describing the numbers I beheld, nor their gaily varied colouring. I could not find in my heart to destroy their felicity; to scatter their bright plu-

* Ariosto *Orlando Furioso*. — *Canto 7, stanza 22.*

mage, and snatch them for ever from the realms of light and flowers. Had I been less compassionate, I should have gained credit with that respectable corps, the torturers of butterflies; and might, perhaps, have enriched their cabinets with some unknown captives. However, I left them imbibing the dews of heaven, in free possession of their native rights; and having changed horses at Tremolano, entered; at length, my long-desired Italy.

The pass is rocky and tremendous, guarded by the fortress of Covalo, in possession of the empress queen, and only fit, one should think, to be inhabited by her eagles. There is no attaining this exalted hold but by the means of a cord let down many fathoms by the soldiers, who live in dens and caverns, which serve also as arsenals, and magazines for powder; whose mysteries I declined prying into, their approach being a little too aerial for my earthly frame. A black vapour, tinging their entrance, completed the romance of the prospect, which I never shall forget.

For two or three leagues there was little variation in the scenery; cliffs, nearly perpendicular on both sides, and the Brenta foaming and thundering below. Beyond, the rocks began to be mantled with vines and gardens. Here and there a cottage, with shaded mulberries, made its appearance, and we often discovered, on the banks of the river, ranges of white buildings, with courts and awnings, beneath which numbers of women and children were employed in manufacturing silk. As we advanced, the stream gradually widened, and the rocks receded; woods were more frequent and cottages thicker strown.

About five in the evening we left the country of crags and precipices, of mists and cataracts, and were entering the fertile territory of the Bassanese. It was now I beheld groves of olives, and vines clustering the summits of the tallest elms; pomegranates in every garden, and vases of citron and orange before almost every door. The softness and transparency of the air soon told me I was arrived in happier climates; and I felt sensations of joy and novelty run through my veins, upon beholding this smiling land

of groves and verdure stretched out before me. A few hazy vapours, I can hardly call them clouds, rested upon the extremities of the land-scape; and, through their medium, the sun cast an oblique and dewy ray. Peasants were returning home, singing as they went, and calling to each other over the hills; whilst the women were milking goats before the wickets of the cottage, and preparing their country fare.

I left them enjoying it, and soon beheld the ancient ramparts and cypresses of Bassano; whose classic appearance recalled the memory of former times, and answered exactly the ideas I had pictured to myself of Italian edifices. Though encompassed by walls and turrets, neither soldiers nor custom-house officers start out from their concealment, to question and molest a weary traveller, for such is the happiness of the Venetian state, at least of the terra firma provinces, that it does not contain, I believe, above four regiments. Istria, Dalmatia, and the maritime frontiers, are more formidably guarded, as they touch, you know, the whiskers of the Turkish empire.

Passing under a Doric gateway, we crossed the chief part of the town in the way to our locanda, pleasantly situated and commanding a level green, where people walk and take ices by moonlight. On the right, the Franciscan church, and convent, half hid in the religious gloom of pine and cypress; to the left, a perspective of walls and towers rising from the turf, and marking it when I arrived, with long shadows in front; where the lawn terminates, meadow, wood, and garden run quite to the base of the mountains.

Twilight coming on, this beautiful spot swarmed with company, sitting in circles upon the grass, refreshing themselves with fruit and sherbets, or lounging upon the bank beneath the towers. They looked so free and happy that I longed to be acquainted with them; and, thanks to a warm-hearted old Venetian (the Senator Querini), was introduced to a group of the principal inhabitants. Our conversation ended in a promise to meet the next evening at the villa of La Contessa Roberti, about a league from

Bassano, and then to return together and sing to the praise of Pachierotti, their idol, as well as mine,

You can have no idea what pleasure we mutually found in being of the same faith, and believing in one singer; nor can you imagine what effects that musical divinity produced at Padua, where he performed a few years ago, and threw his audience into such raptures, that it was some time before they recovered. One in particular, a lady of distinction, fainted away the instant she caught the pathetic accents of his voice, and was near dying a martyr to its melody. La Contessa, who sings in the truest taste, gave me a detail of the whole affair, « Egli ha fatto veramente un fanatismo a Padua, » was her expression. I assured her we were not without idolatry in England. upon his account; but that in this, as well as in other articles of belief, there were many abominable heretics.

LETTER II.

Villa of Mosolente. — The route to Venice. — First view of that city — Striking prospect from the Leon Bianco. — Morning scene on the grand canal. — Church of Santa Maria della Salute. — Interesting group of stately buildings. — Convent of St. Giorgio Maggiore. — The Redentore. — Island of the Carthusians.

August 1st, 1780.

The whole morning not a soul stirred who could avoid it. Those who were so active and lively the night before, were now stretched languidly upon their couches; Being to the full as idly disposed, I sat down and wrote some of this dreaming epistle; then feasted upon figs and melons; then got under the shade of the cypress, and slumbered till evening, only waking to dine, and take some ice.

The sun declining apace, I hastened to my engagement at Mosolente (for so is the villa called), placed on a verdant hill encircled by others as lovely, and consisting of three light pavilions connected by porticoes; just such as we admire in the fairy scenes of an opera. A vast flight of steps leads to the summit, where Signora Roberti and her

♦♦

friends received me with a grace and politeness that can never want a place in my memory. We ramhled over all the apartments of this agreeable edifice, characterised by airiness and simplicity. The pavement incrustcd with a composition as cool and polished as marble; the windows, doors, and balconies adorned with silver iron work, commanding scenes of meads and woodlands that extend to the shores of the Adriatic; slender towers and cypresses rising above the levels; and the hazy mountains beyond Padua, diversifying the expanse, form altogether a landscape which the elegant imagination of Horizonti never exceeded.

I gazed on this delightful view till it faded in the dusk; then returning to Bassano, repaired to an illuminated hall, and heard Signora Roberti sing the very air which had excited such transport at Padua. As soon as she had ended, a band of various instruments stationed in the open street began a lively symphony, which would have delighted me at any other time; but now, I wished them a thousand leagues away, so pleasingly melancholy an impression did the air I had been listening to, leave on my mind.

At midnight I took leave of my obliging hosts, who were just setting out for Padua. They gave me a thousand kind invitations, and I hope some future day to accept them.

August 2.

Our route to Venice lay winding about the variegated plains I had surveyed from Mosolente; and after dining at Treviso we came in two hours and a half to Mestre, between grand villas and gardens peopled with statues. Embarking our baggage at the last mentioned place, we stepped into a gondola, whose even motion was very agreeable after the jolts of a chaise. We were soon out of the canal of Mestre, terminated by an isle which contains a cell dedicated to the Holy Virgin, peeping out of a thicket, whence spire up two tall cypresses. Its bells tingled as we passed along and dropped some paolis into a net tied at the end of a pole stretched out to us for that purpose.

As soon as we had doubled the cape of this diminutive island, an expanse of sea opened to our view, the domes and towers of Venice rising from its bosom. Now we began to distinguish Murano, St. Michele, St. Giorgio in Alga, and several other islands, detached from the grand cluster, which I hailed as old acquaintances; innumerable prints and drawings having long since made their shapes familiar. Still gliding forward, we every moment distinguished some new church or palace in the city, suffused with the rays of the setting sun, and reflected with all their glow of colouring from the surface of the waters.

The air was calm; the sky cloudless; a faint wind just breathing upon the deep, lightly bore its surface against the steps of a chapel in the island of San Secondo, and waved the veil before its portal, as we rowed by and coasted the walls of its garden overhung with fig-trees and surmounted by spreading pines. The convent discovers itself through their branches, built in a style somewhat morisco, and level with the sea, except where the garden intervenes.

We were now drawing very near the city, and a confused hum began to interrupt the evening stillness; gondolas were continually passing and repassing, and the entrance of the Canal Reggio, with all its stir and bustle, lay before us. Our gondoliers turned with much address through a crowd of boats and barges that blocked up the way, and rowed smoothly by the side of a broad pavement, covered with people in all dresses and of all nations.

Leaving the Palazzo Pesaro, a noble structure with two rows of arcades and a superb rustic, behind, we were soon landed before the Leon Bianco, which being situated in one of the broadest parts of the grand canal, commands a most striking assemblage of buildings. I have no terms to describe the variety of pillars, of pediments, of mouldings, and cornices, some Grecian, others Saracenic, that adorn these edifices, of which the pencil of Canaletti conveys so perfect an idea as to render all verbal description superfluous. At one end of this grand scene of perspective appears the Rialto; the sweep of the canal conceals the other.

The rooms of our hotel are spacious and cheerful ; a lofty hall, or rather gallery, painted with grotesque in a very good style, perfectly clean, floored with a marbled stucco, divides the house, and admits a refreshing current of air. Several windows near the ceiling look into this vast apartment, which serves in lieu of a court, and is rendered perfectly luminous by a glazed arcade, thrown open to catch the breezes. Through it I passed to a balcony which impends over the canal, and is twined round with plants forming a green festoon springing from two large vases of orange trees placed at each end. Here I established myself to enjoy the cool, and observe, as well as the dusk would permit, the variety of figures shooting by in their gondolas.

As night approached, innumerable tapers glimmered through the awnings before the windows. Every boat had its lantern, and the gondolas moving rapidly along were followed by tracks of light, which gleamed and played upon the waters. I was gazing at these dancing fires when the sounds of music were wafted along the canals, and as they grew louder and louder, an illuminated barge, filled with musicians, issued from the Rialto, and stopping under one of the palaces, began a serenade, which stilled every clamour and suspended all conversation in the galleries and porticoes; till, rowing slowly away, it was heard no more. The gondoliers catching the air, imitated its cadences, and were answered by others at a distance, whose voices; echoed by the arch of the bridge, acquired a plaintive and interesting tone. I retired to rest, full of the sound; and long after I was asleep, the melody seemed to vibrate in my ear.

August 3.

It was not five o'clock before I was aroused by a loud din of voices and splashing of water under my balcony. Looking out, I beheld the grand canal so entirely covered with fruits and vegetables, on rafts and in barges, that I could scarcely distinguish a wave. Loads of grapes, peaches and melons arrived, and disappeared in an instant,

for every vessel was in motion; and the crowds of purchasers hurrying from boat to boat, formed a very lively picture. Amongst the multitudes, I remarked a good many whose dress and carriage announced something above the common rank; and upon enquiry I found they were noble Venetians, just come from their casinos, and met to refresh themselves with fruit, before they retired to sleep for the day.

Whilst I was observing them, the sun began to colour the balustrades of the palaces, and the pure exhilarating air of the morning drawing me abroad, I procured a gondola, laid in my provision of bread and grapes, and was rowed under the Rialto, down the grand canal to the marble steps of S. Maria della Salute, erected by the Senate in performance of a vow to the Holy Virgin, who begged off a terrible pestilence in 1650. The great bronze portal opened whilst I was standing on the steps which lead to it, and discovered the interior of the dome, where I expatiated in solitude; no mortal appearing except an old priest, who trimmed the lamps and muttered a prayer before the high altar, still wrapt in shadows. The sunbeams began to strike against the windows of the cupola, just as I left the church and was wafted across the waves to the spacious platform in front of St. Giorgio Maggiore, one of the most celebrated works of Palladio.

When my first transport was a little subsided, and I had examined the graceful design of each particular ornament, and united the just proportion and grand effect of the whole in my mind, I planted my umbrella on the margin of the sea, and viewed at my leisure the vast range of palaces, of porticoes, of towers, opening on every side and extending out of sight. The Doge's palace and the tall column at the entrance of the place of St. Mark, form together with the arcades of the public library, the lofty Campanile and the cupolas of the ducal church, one of the most striking groups of buildings that art can boast of. To behold at one glance these stately fabrics, so illustrious in the records of former ages, before which, in the flourishing times of the republic, so many valiant chief and prin-

ces have landed, loaded with oriental spoils, was a spectacle I had long and ardently desired. I thought of the days of Frederic Barbarossa, when looking up the piazza of St. Mark, along which he marched in solemn procession, to cast himself at the feet of Alexander the Third, and pay a tardy homage to St Peter's successor. Here were no longer those splendid fleets that attended his progress; one solitary galeass was all I beheld, anchored opposite the palace of the Doge, and surrounded by crowds of gondolas, whose sable hues contrasted strongly with its vermillion oars and shining ornaments. A party coloured multitude was continually shifting from one side of the piazza to the other; whilst senators and magistrates in long black robes were already arriving to fill their respective offices.

I contemplated the busy scene from my peaceful platform, where nothing stirred but aged devotees creeping to their devotions, and, whilst I remained thus calm and tranquil, heard the distant buzz of the town. Fortunately, some length of waves rolled between me and its tumults; so that I ate my grapes, and read Metastasio, undisturbed by officiousness or curiosity. When the sun became too powerful, I entered the nave.

After I had admired the masterly structure of the roof and the lightness of its arches, my eyes naturally directed themselves to the pavement of white and ruddy marble, polished, and reflecting like a mirror the columns which rise from it. Over this I walked to a door that admitted me into the principal quadrangle of the convent, surrounded by a cloister supported on Ionic pillars, beautifully proportioned. A flight of stairs opens into the court, adorned with balustrades and pedestals, sculptured with elegance truly Grecian. This brought me to the refectory, where the chef-d'œuvre of Paul Veronese, representing the marriage of Cana in Galilee, was the first object that presented itself. I never beheld so gorgeous a group of wedding-garments before; there is every variety of fold and plait that can possibly be imagined. The attitudes and countenances are more uniform, and the guest appear

a very genteel, deceit sort of people, well used to the mode of their times and accustomed to miracles.

Having examined this fictitious repast, I cast a look on a long range of tables covered with very excellent realities, which the monks were coming to devour with energy, if one might judge from their appearance. These sons of penitence and mortification possess one of the most spacious islands of the whole cluster, a princely habitation, with gardens and open porticoes, that engross every breath of air; and, what adds not a little to the charms of their abode, is the facility of making excursions from it, whenever they have a mind.

The republic, jealous of ecclesiastical influence, connives at these amusing rambles, and, by encouraging the liberty of monks and churchmen, prevents their appearing too sacred and important in the eyes of the people, who have frequent proofs of their being mere flesh and blood, and that of the frailest composition. Had the rest of Italy been of the same opinion, and profited as much by Fra Paolo's maxims, some of its fairest fields would not, at this moment, lie uncultivated, and its ancient spirit might have revived. However, I can scarcely think the moment far distant, when it will assert its natural prerogatives, and look back upon the tiara, with all its host of scaring phantoms, as the offspring of a feverish dream.

Full of prophecies and bodings, I moved slowly out of the cloisters; and, gaining my gondola, arrived, I know not how, at the flights of steps which lead to the Redentore, a structure so simple and elegant, that I thought myself entering an antique temple, and looked about for the statue of the God of Delphi, or some other graceful divinity. A huge crucifix of bronze soon brought me to times present.

The charm being thus dissolved, I began to perceive the shapes of rueful martyrs peeping out of the niches around, and the bushy beards of capuchin friars wagging before the altars. These good fathers had decorated the nave with orange and citron trees, placed between the pilasters of the arcades; and on grand festivals, it seems,

they turn the whole church into a bower, strew the pavement with leaves, and festoon the dome with flowers.

I left them occupied with their plants and their devotions. It was mid-day, and I begged to be rowed to some woody island, where I might dine in shade and tranquillity. My gondoliers shot off in an instant; but, though they went at a very rapid rate, I wished to advance still faster, and getting into a bark with six oars, swept along the waters, soon left the Zecca and San Marco behind; and, launching into the plains of shining sea, saw turret after turret, and isle after isle, fleeting before me. A pale greenish light ran along the shores of the distant continent, whose mountains seemed to catch the motion of my boat; and to fly with equal celerity.

I had not much time to contemplate the beautiful effects on the waters — the emerald and purple hues which gloomed along their surface. Our prow struck, foaming, against the walks of the Carthusian garden, before I recollected where I was, or could look attentively around me. Permission being obtained, I entered this cool retirement, and putting aside with my hands the boughs of figs and pomegranates, got under an ancient bay-tree on the summit of a little knoll, near which several tall pines lift themselves up to the breezes. I listened to the conversation they held, with a wind just flown from Greece, and charged, as well as I could understand this airy language, with many affectionate remembrances from their relations on Mount Ida.

I reposed amidst fragrant leaves, fanned by a constant air, till it pleased the fathers to send me some provisions, with a basket of fruit and wine. Two of them would wait upon me, and ask ten thousand questions about Lord George Gordon, and the American war. I, who was deeply engaged with the winds, and a thousand agreeable associations excited by my Grecian fancies, wished my interrogators in purgatory, and pleaded ignorance of the Italian language. This circumstance extricated me from my embarrassment, and procured me a long interval of repose.

LETTER III.

Church of St. Mark. — The Piazza. — Magnificent festivals formerly celebrated there. — Stately architecture of Sansovino. — The Campanile. — The Loggetta. — The Ducal Palace. — Colossal Statues. — Giants' Stairs. — Fit of enthusiasm. — Evening-scene in the great Square. — Venetian intrigue. — Confusion of languages. — Madame de Rosenberg. — Character of the Venetians.

The rustling of the pines had the same effect as the murmurs of other old story-tellers, and I dozed undisturbed till the people without, in the boat (who wondered not a little, I dare say, what was become of me within), began a sort of chorus in parts, full of such plaintive modulation, that I still thought myself under the influence of a dream, and, half in this world and half in the other believed, like the heroes of Fingal, that I had caught the music of the spirits of the hill.

When I was thoroughly convinced of the reality of these sounds, I moved towards the shore whence they proceeded: a glassy sea lay before me; no gale ruffled the expanse; every breath had subsided, and I beheld the sun go down in all its sacred calm. — You have experienced the sensations this moment inspires; imagine what they must have been in such a scene, and accompanied with a melody so simple and pathetic. I stepped into my boat; and now, instead of encouraging the speed of the gondoliers, begged them to abate their ardour, and row me lazily home. They complied, and we were near an hour reaching the platform in front of the ducal palace, thronged as usual with a variety of nations. I mixed a moment with the crowd; then directed my steps to the great mosque, I ought to say the church of St. Mark; but really its cupolas, slender pinnacles, and semicircular arches, have so oriental an appearance, as to excuse this appellation. I looked a moment at the four stately coursers of bronze and gold that adorn the chief portal, and then took in, at one glance, the whole extent of the piazza, with its towers and standards. A more noble assemblage was ne-

ver exhibited by architecture. I envied the good fortune of Petrarch, who describes, in one of his letters, a tournament held in this princely opening.

Many are the festivals which have been here celebrated. When Henry the Third left Poland to mount the throne of France, he passed through Venice, and found the Senate waiting to receive him in their famous square, which by means of an awning stretched from the balustrades of opposite palaces, was metamorphosed into a vast saloon, sparkling with artificial stars, and spread with the richest carpets of the East. What a magnificent idea? The ancient Romans, in the zenith of power and luxury, never conceived a greater. It is to them, however, the Venetians are indebted for the hint, since we read of the Coliseo and Pompey's theatre being sometimes covered with transparent canvas, to defend the spectators from the heat or sudden rain, and to tint the scene with soft agreeable colours.

Having enjoyed the general perspective of the piazza, I began to enter into particulars, and examine the bronze pedestals of the three standards before the great church, designed by Sansovino in the true spirit of the antique, and covered with *relievos*, at once bold and elegant. It is also to this celebrated architect we are indebted for the stately façade of the *Procuratie nuove*, which forms one side of the square, and presents an uninterrupted series of arcades and marble columns exquisitely wrought. Opposite this magnificent range appears another line of palaces, whose architecture, though far removed from the Grecian elegance of Sansovino, impresses veneration, and completes the pomp of the view.

There is something strange and singular in the Tower or Campanile, which rises distinct from the smooth pavement of the square, a little to the left as you stand before the chief entrance of St. Mark's. The design is barbarous, and terminates in uncouth and heavy pyramids; yet in spite of these defects it struck me with awe. A beautiful building called the *Loggetta*, and which serves as a guard-house during the convocation of the Grand Council,

decorates its base. Nothing can be more enriched, more finished than this structure, which, though far from diminutive, is in a manner lost at the foot of the Campanile. This enormous fabric seems to promise a long duration, and will probably exhibit St. Mark and his Lion to the latest posterity. Both appear in great state towards its summit, and have nothing superior, but an archangel perched on the topmost pinnacle, and pointing to the skies. The dusk prevented my remarking the various sculptures with which the Loggetta is crowded.

Crossing the ample space between this graceful edifice and the ducal palace, I passed through a labyrinth of pillars and entered the principal court, of which nothing but the great outline was visible at so late an hour. Two reservoirs of bronze, richly sculptured, diversify the area. In front a magnificent flight of steps presents itself, by which the senators ascend through vast and solemn corridors, which lead to the interior of the edifice. The colossal statues of Mars and Neptune guard the entrance, and have given the appellation of *scala dei giganti*, to the steps below, which I mounted not without respect; and, leaning against the balustrades, formed like the rest of the building of the rarest marbles, contemplated the tutelary divinities.

My admiration was shortly interrupted by one of the *sbirri*, or officers of police, who take their stands after sunset before the avenues of the palace, and who told me the gates were upon the point of being closed. So, hurrying down the steps, I left a million of delicate sculptures unexplored; for every pilaster, every frieze, every entablature, is encrusted with porphyry, verde antique, or some other precious marble, carved into as many grotesque wreaths of foliage as we admire in the loggie of Raphael. The various portals, the strange projections; in short, the striking irregularity of these stately piles, delighted me beyond idea; and I was sorry to be forced to abandon them so soon, especially as the twilight, which bats and owls love not better than I do, enlarged every portico, lengthened every colonnade, and increased the

dimensions of the whole, just as imagination desired. This faculty would have had full scope, had I but remained an hour longer. The moon would then have gleamed upon the gigantic forms of Mars and Neptune, and discovered the statues of ancient heroes emerging from the gloom of their niches.

Such an interesting combination of objects, such regal scenery, with the reflection that many of their ornaments once contributed to the decoration of Athens, transported me beyond myself. The *sbirri* thought me distracted. True enough, I was stalking proudly about like an actor in an ancient Grecian tragedy, lifting up his hands to the consecrated fanes and images around, expecting the reply of his attendant chorus; and declaiming the first verses of *Œdipus Tyrannus*.

This fit of enthusiasm was hardly subsided, when I passed the gates of the palace into the great square, which received a faint gleam from its casinos and palaces, just beginning to be lighted up, and to become the resort of pleasure and dissipation. Numbers were walking in parties upon the pavement; some sought the convenient gloom of the porticoes with their favourites; others were earnestly engaged in conversation, and filled the gay illuminated apartments, where they resorted to drink coffee and sorbet, with laughter and merriment. A thoughtless giddy transport prevailed; for, at this hour, anything like restraint seems perfectly out of the question; and however solemn a magistrate or senator may appear in the day, at night he lays up wig and robe and gravity to sleep together, runs intriguing about in his gondola, takes the reigning sultana under his arm, and so rambles half over the town, which grows gayer and gayer as the day declines.

Many of the noble Venetians have a little suite of apartments in some out-of-the-way corner, near the grand piazza, of which their families are totally ignorant. To these they skulk in dusk, and revel undisturbed with the companions of their pleasures. Jealousy itself cannot discover the alleys, the winding passages, the unsuspected doors, by which these retreats are accessible. Many

an unhappy lover, whose mistress disappears on a sudden with some fortunate rival, has searched for her haunts in vain. The gondoliers themselves, though the prime managers of intrigue, are often unacquainted with these interior cabinets. When a gallant has a mind to pursue his adventures with mystery, he rows to the piazza, orders his bark to wait, meets his goddess in the crowd, and vanishes from all beholders. Surely, Venice is the city in the universe best calculated for giving scope to the observations of a devil upon two sticks. What a variety of lurking-places would one stroke of his crutch uncover!

Whilst the higher ranks were solacing themselves in their casinos, the rabble were gathered in knots round the strollers and mountebanks, singing and scaramouching in the middle of the square. I observed a great number of Orientals amongst the crowd, and heard Turkish and Arabic muttering in every corner. Here the Slavonian dialect predominated; there some Grecian jargon, almost unintelligible. Had Saint Mark's church been the wondrous tower, and its piazza the chief square of the city of Babylon, there could scarcely have been a greater confusion of languages.

The novelty of the scene afforded me no small share of amusement, and I wandered about from group to group, and from one strange exotic to another, asking and being asked innumerable ridiculous questions, and settling the politics of London and Constantinople, almost in the same breath. This instant I found myself in a circle of grave Armenian priests and jewellers; the next amongst Greeks and Dalmatians, who accosted me with the smoothest compliments, and gave proof that their reputation for pliability and address was not ill-founded.

I was entering into a grand harum-scarum discourse with some Russian counts or princes, or whatever you please, just landed with dwarfs, and footmen, and governors, and staring like me, about them, when Madame de Rosenberg arrived, to whom I had the happiness of being recommended. She presented me to some of the most distinguished of the Venetian families at their great

casino which looks into the piazza, and consists of five or six rooms, fitted up in a gay & flimsy taste, neither rich nor elegant, where were a great many lights, and a great many ladies negligently dressed, their hair falling very freely about them, and innumerable adventures written in their eyes. The gentlemen were lolling upon the sofas, or lounging about the apartments.

The whole assembly seemed upon the verge of gaping, till coffee was carried. This magic beverage diffused a temporary animation; and, for a moment or two, conversation moved on with a degree of pleasing extravagance; but the flash was soon dissipated, and nothing remained save cards and stupidity.

In the intervals of shuffling and dealing, some talked over the affairs of the grand council with less reserve than I expected; and two or three of them asked some feeble questions about the late tumu^t in London. It was one o'clock before all the company were assembled, and I left them at three, still dreaming over their coffee and card-tables. Treize is their favourite game: *uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque, fante, cavallo re*, are eternally repeated; the apartments echoed no other sound.

I wonder a lively people can endure such monotony, for I have been told the Venetians are remarkably spirited; and so eager in the pursuit of amusement as hardly to allow themselves any sleep. Some, for instance, after declaiming in the Senate, walking an hour in the square, and fidgeting about from one casino to another till morning dawns, will get into a gondola, row across the Lagunes, take the post to Mestre or Fusina, and jumble over craggy pavements to Treviso, breakfast in haste, and rattle back again as if the Devil were charioteer: by eleven the party is restored to Venice, resumes robe and periwig, and goes to council.

This may be very true, and yet I will never cite the Venetians as examples of vivacity. Their nerves, unstrung by early debaucheries, allow no natural flow of lively spirits, and at best but a few moments of a false and feverish activity. The approaches of sleep, forced

back by an immoderate use of coffee, render them weak and listless, and the facility, of being wafted from place to place in a gondola, adds not a little to their indolence. In short, I can scarcely regard their Eastern neighbours in a more lazy light; who, thanks to their opium and their harems, pass their lives in one perpetual doze.

LETTER IV.

Excessive heat. — The Devil and Senegal. — A dreary shore. — Scene of the Doge's nuptials with the sea. — Return to the Place of St. Mark. — Swarm of Lawyers. — Receptacles for anonymous accusations. — The Council of Ten. — Terrible punishments of its victims. — Statue of Neptune. — Fatal Waters. — Bridge of Sighs. — The Fondamenti Nuovi. — Conservatory of the Mendicanti. — An Oratorio. — Profound attention of the Audience.

August 4th, 1780.

The heats were so excessive in the night, that I thought myself several times on the point of suffocation, tossed about like a wounded fish, and dreamt of the Devil and Senegal. Towards sunrise, a faint breeze restored me to life and reason. I slumbered till late in the day, and the moment I was fairly awake, ordered my gondolier to row out to the main ocean, that I might plunge into its waves, and hear and see nothing but waters around me.

We shot off, wound among a number of sheds, shops, churches, casinos, and palaces, growing immediately out of the canals, without any apparent foundation. No quay, no terrace, not even a slab is to be seen before the doors; one step brings you from the hall into the bark, and the vestibules of the stateliest structures lie open to the waters, and but just above their level. I observed several, as I glided along, supported by rows of well-proportioned columns, adorned with terms and vases, beyond which the eye generally discovers a grand court, and sometimes a garden.

In about half an hour, we had left the thickest cluster of isles behind, and, coasting the place of St. Mark, opposite to San Giorgio Maggiore, whose elegant frontis-

piece was distinctly reflected by the calm waters, launched into the blue expanse of sea, from which rise the Carthusian and two or three other woody islands. I hailed the spot where had passed such a happy visionary evening, and nodded to my friends the pines.

A few minutes more brought me to a dreary, sun-burnt shore, stalked over by a few Sclavonian soldiers, who inhabit a castle hard by, go regularly to an unfinished church, and from thence, it is to be hoped, to paradise; as the air of their barracks is abominable, and kills them like blasted sheep.

Forlorn as this island appeared to me, I was told it was the scene of the Doge's pageantry at the feast of the Ascension; and the very spot to which he sails in the Bucentaur, previously to wedding the sea. You have heard enough, and if ever you looked into a show-box, seen full sufficient of this gaudy spectacle, without my enlarging upon the topic. I shall only say, that I was obliged to pursue, partly, the same road as the nuptial procession, in order to reach the beach, and was boiled and dazzled accordingly.

At last, after traversing some desert hillocks, all of a hop with toads and locusts (amongst which English heretics have the honour of being interred), I passed under an arch, and suddenly the boundless plains of ocean opened to my view, I ran to the smooth sands, extending on both sides out of sight, and dashed into the waves, which were coursing one another with gentle motion, and breaking lightly on the shores. The tide rolled over me as I lay floating about, buoyed up by the water, and carried me whithersoever it listed. It might have borne me far out into the main before I had been aware, so totally was I abandoned to the illusion of the moment. My ears were filled with murmuring undecided sounds; my limbs, stretched languidly on the surge, rose or sunk just as it swelled or subsided. In this passive state I remained, till the sun cast a less intolerable light, and the fishing-vessels lying out in the bay at a great distance, spread their sails and were coming home.

Hastening back over the desert of locusts, I threw myself into the gondola; and, no wind or wave opposing, was soon wafted across to those venerable columns, so conspicuous in the Place of St. Mark. Directing my course immediately to the ducal palace, I entered the grand court, ascending the giants' stairs, and examined at my leisure its bas-reliefs. Then, taking the first guide that presented himself, I was shown along several cloisters and corridors, sustained by innumerable pillars, into the state apartments, which Tintoret and Paolo Veronese have covered with the triumphs of their country.

A swarm of lawyers filled the Sala del Maggior Consiglio, and one of the first advocates in the republic was pleading with all his might, before a solemn row of senators. The eyes and ears of the assembly seemed equally affected. Clouds of powder, and volleys of execrations issuing every instant from the disputants, I got out of their way, and was led from hall to hall, and from picture to picture, with exemplary resignation. To be sure, I was heartily tired, but behaved with decency, having never once expressed how much I wished the *chef-d'œuvres* I had been contemplating, less smoky and numerous.

At last, I reached once more the colonnades at the entrance, and caught the sea-breeze in the open porticoes which front San Giorgio Maggiore. The walls are covered in most places with grim visages, sculptured in marbre, whose mouths gape for accusations, and swallow every lie that malice and revenge can dictate. I wished for a few ears of the same kind, dispersed about the Doge's residence, to which one might apply one's own, and catch some account of the mysteries within; some little dialogue between the three Inquisitors, or debate in the Council of Ten.

This is the tribunal which holds the wealthy nobility in continual awe: before which they appear with trembling and terror, and whose summons they dare not disobey. Sometimes, by way of clemency, it condemns its victims to perpetual imprisonment, in close, stifling cells, between the leads and beams of the palace; or, unwilling to

spill the blood of a fellow-citizen , generously sinks them into dungeons , deep under the canals which wash its foundations , so that , above and below , its majesty is contaminated by the abodes of punishment. What other sovereign could endure the idea of having his immediate residence polluted with tears ? or revel in his halls , conscious that many of his species were consuming their hours in lamentations above his head , and that but a few beams separated him from the scene of their tortures ? However gaily disposed , could one dance with pleasure on a pavement , beneath which lie damp and gloomy caverns , whose inhabitants waste away by painful degrees , and feel themselves whole years a-dying ? Impressed by these terrible ideas , I could not regard the palace without horror , and wished for the strength of a thousand antediluvians , to level it with the sea , lay open the secret recesses of punishment , and admit free gales and sunshine into every den.

When I had thus vented my indignation , I repaired to the statue of Neptune , whom twenty ages ago I should have invoked to second my enterprise. Once upon a time no deity had a freer hand at razing cities. His execution was renowned throughout all antiquity , and the proudest monarchs deprecated the wrath of

. But , like the other mighty ones of ancient days , his reign is past and his trident disregarded. Formerly any wild spirit found favour in the eyes of fortune , and was led along the career of glory to the deliverance of captives and the extirpation of monsters ; but in our degenerate times , this easy road to fame is no longer open , and the means of producing such signal events are perplexed and difficult.

Abandoning , therefore , the sad tenants of the piombi to their fate , I left the courts , and stepping into my bark was rowed down a canal overshadowed by the lofty walls of the palace. Beneath these fatal waters the dungeons I have also been speaking of are situated. There the wretches lie marking the sound of the oars , and counting the free passage of every gondola. Above , a marble bridge ,

of bold majestic architecture, joins the highest part of the prisons to the secret galleries of the palace; from whence criminals are conducted over the arch to a cruel and mysterious death. I shuddered whilst passing below; and believe it is not without cause, this structure is named PONTE DEI SOSPIRI. Horrors and dismal prospects haunted my fancy upon my return. I could not dine in peace, so strongly was my imagination affected; but snatching my pencil, I drew chasms and subterraneous hollows, the domain of fear and torture, with chains, racks, wheels, and dreadful engines in the style of Piranesi. About sunset I went and refeeshed myself with the cool air and cheerful scenery of the Fondamenti nuovi, a vast quay or terrace of white marble, which commands the whole series of isles, from San Michele to Torcello,

« That rise and glitter o'er the ambient tide. »

Nothing can be more picturesque than the groups of towers and cupolas which they present, mixed with flat roofs and low buildings, and now and then a pine or cypress. Afar off, a little woody isle, called Il Deserto, swells from the ocean and diversifies its expanse.

When I had spent a delightful half-hour in viewing the distant isles, M. de Benincasa accompanied me to the Mendicanti, one of the four conservatorios, which give the best musical education conceivable to near one hundred young women. You may imagine how admirably those of the Mendicanti in particular are taught, since their establishment is under the direction of Bertoni, who breathes around him the very soul of harmony. The chapel in which we sat to hear the oratorio was dark and solemn; a screen of lofty pillars, formed of black marble and highly polished, reflected the lamps which burn perpetually before the altar. Every tribune was thronged with people, whose profound silence showed them worthy auditors of this master's music. Here were no cackling old women, or groaning Methodists, such as infest our English tabernacles, and scare one's ears with hoarse

cotghs accompanied by the *naso obligato*. All were still and attentive, imbibing the plaintive notes of the voices with eagerness; and scarce a countenance but seemed deeply affected with David's sorrows, the subject of the performance. I sat retired in a solitary tribune, and felt them as my own. Night came on before the last chorus was sung, and I still seem to hear its sacred melody.

LETTER V.

M. de Viloison and his attendant Laplander.— Drawings of ancient Venetian costume in one of the Gradanigo palaces. — Titian's masterpiece in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo. — The distant Euganean hills.

It rains; the air is refreshed, and I have courage to resume my pen, which the sultry weather had forced to lie dormant so long. I like this odd town of Venice, and find every day some new amusement in rambling about its innumerable canals and alleys. Sometimes I pry about the great church of Saint Mark, and examine the variety of marbles and mazes of delicate sculpture with which it is covered. The cupola, glittering with gold, mosaic, and paintings of half the wonders in the Apocalypse, never fails to transport me to the period of the Eastern empire. I think myself in Constantinople, and expect Michael Paleologus with all his train. One circumstance alone prevents my observing half the treasures of the place, and holds down my fancy just springing into the air: I mean the vile stench which exhales from every recess and corner of the edifice, and which all the incense of the altars cannot subdue.

When no longer able to endure this noxious atmosphere, I run up the Campanile in the piazza, and seating myself amongst the pillars of the gallery breathe the fresh gales which blow from the Adriatic; survey at my leisure all Venice beneath me, with its azure sea, white sails, and long tracks of islands shining in the sun, Having thus laid in a provision of wholesome breezes, I

brave the vapours of the canals, and venture into the most curious and murky quarters of the city, in search of Turks and Infidels, that I may ask as many questions as I please about Cairo and Damaseus.

Asiaties find Venice very much to their taste, and all those I conversed with allowed its customs and style of living had a good deal of conformity to their own. The eternal lounging in coffeehouses and sipping of sorbets agree perfectly well with the inhabitants of the Ottoman empire, who stalk about here in their proper dresses, and smoke their own exotic pipes, without being stared and wondered at as in most other European capitals. Some few of these Orientals are communicative and enlightened; but generally speaking, they know nothing beyond the rule of three, and the commonest transactions of mercantile affairs.

The Greeks are by far a more lively generation, still retaining their propensity to works of genius and imagination. *Metastasio* has been lately translated into their modern language, and some obliging papa or other has had the patience to put the long-winded romance of *Clelia* into a Greecian dress. I saw two or three of these volumes exposed on a stall, under the grand arcades of the public library, as I went one day to admire the antiques in its vestibules.

Whilst I was intent upon my occupation, a little door, I never should have suspected, flew open. and out popped *Monsieur de Viloison*, from a place where nothing, I believe, but broomsticks and certain other utensils were ever before deposited. This gentleman, the most active investigator of Homer since the days of the good bishop of Thessalonica, bespatters you with more learning in a minute than others communicate in half a year; quotes *Arabie*, Greek, Hebrew, Syriae, etc. with formidable fluency; and drove me from one end of the room to the other with a storm of erudition. Syllables fell thicker than hail, and in an instant I found myself so weighed down and covered, that I prayed, for mercy's sake, to be introduced, by way of respite,

to a Laplander whom he leads about as a curiosity ; a poor harmless good sort of a soul , calm and indifferent , who has acquired the words of several Oriental languages to perfection : ideas he has in none.

We went all together to view a collection of medals in one of the Gradanigo palaces , and two or three inestimable volumes , filled with paintings that represent the dress of the ancient Venetians ; so that I had an opportunity of observing to perfection all the Lapland nothingness of my companion. What a perfect void ! Cold and silent as the polar regions , not one passion ever throbbled in his bosom ; not one bright ray of fancy ever glittered in his mind ; without love or anger , pleasure or pain , his days fleet smoothly along : all things considered , I must confess I envied such comfortable apathy.

After having passed an instructive hour in examining the medals and drawings , M. de Viloison proposed conducting me to the Armenian convent , but I begged to be excused , and went to San Giovanni e Paolo , a church to be held most holy in the annals of painting , since it contains that masterpiece of Titian , the martyrdom of the hermits St. Paul and St. Peter.

In the evening I rowed out as usual

« On the clear hyaline , the glassy sea , »

to observe the effect of sunset on the tufted gardens of the Giudeca , and to contemplate the distant Euganean hills , once the happiest region of Italy ; where wandering nations enjoyed the simplicity of a pastoral life , before the arrival of Antenor. In these primeval days deep forests and extensive pastures covered the shores of the Adriatic , and innumerable flocks hung on the brow of the mountains. This golden period ended upon the incursion of the Trojans and Heneti ; who , led by Antenor , drove away the unfortunate savages , and possessed themselves of their habitations.

LETTER VI.

Isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazorbo. — The once populous city of Altina. — An excursion. — Effects of our music on the inhabitants of the islands. — Solitary fields infested by serpents. — Remains of ancient sculpture. — Antique and fantastic ornaments of the Cathedral of Torcello. — San Lorenzo's chair. — Dine in a Convent. — The Nuns. — Oratorio of Siscra. — Remarks on the music. — Singing of the Marchetti. — A female orchestra.

I AM just returned from visiting the isles of Burano, Torcello, and Mazorbo, distant about five miles from Venice. To these amphibious spots the Romans, inhabitants of eastern Lombardy, fled from the rapine of Attila; and, if we may believe Cassiodorus, there was a time when they presented a beautiful appearance. Beyond them, on the coast of the Lagunes, rose the once populous city of Altina, with its six stately gates, which Dandolo mentions. Its neighbourhood was scattered with innumerable villas and temples, composing altogether a prospect which Marcial compares to Baiae.

« *Æmula Baiunis Altini littora villis.* »

But this agreeable scene, like so many others, is passed entirely away, and has left nothing, except heaps of stones and mis-shapen fragments, to vouch for its former magnificence. Two of the islands, Costanziano and Amiano, that are imagined to have contained the bowers and gardens of the Altinians, have sunk beneath the waters; those which remain are scarcely worthy to rise above their surface.

Though I was persuaded little was left to be seen above ground, I could not deny myself the imaginary pleasure of treading a corner of the earth once so adorned and cultivated; and of walking over the roofs, perhaps, of undiscovered palaces. M. de R. to whom I communicated my ideas, entered at once into the scheme; hiring therefore a *peiotte*, we took some provisions and

music (to us equally necessities of life) , and launched into the canal , between Saint Michael and Murano. Our instruments played several delightful airs , that called forth the inhabitants of every island ; and held them in silence , as if spell-bound , on the edge of their quays and terraces , till we were out of hearing.

Leaving Murano far behind , Venice and its world of turrets began to sink on the horison , and the low desert isles beyond Mazonbo to lie stretched out before us. Now we beheld vast wastes of purple flowers , and could distinguish the low hum of the insects which hover above them ; such was the stillness of the place. Coasting these solitary fields , we wound amongst several serpentine canals , bordered by gardens of figs and pomegranates , with neat Indian-looking inclosures of cane and reed ; an aromatic plant , which the people justly dignify with the title of marine incense , clothes the margin of the waters. It proved very serviceable in subduing a musky odour , which attacked us the moment we landed , and which proceeds from serpents that lurk in the hedges. These animals , say the gondoliers , defend immense treasures which lie buried under the ruins. Woeto those who attempt to invade them , or pry too cautiously about !

Not choosing to be devoured , we left many a mound of fragments unnoticed , and made the best of our way to a little green , bounded on one side by a miserable shed , decorated with the name of the Podesta's residence , and on the other by a circular church. Some remains of tolerable antique sculpture are enchased in the walls ; and the dome , supported by pillars of a smooth Grecian marble , though uncouth and ill-proportioned , impresses a sort of veneration , and transports the fancy to the twilight glimmering period when it was raised.

Having surveyed what little was visible , and given as much career to our imaginations as the scene inspired , we walked over a soil composed of crumbling bricks and cement to the cathedral ; whose arches , in the ancient Roman style , convinced us that it dates at least as high as the sixth or seventh century.

Nothing can well be more fantastic than the ornaments of this structure, formed from the ruins of the Pagan temples of Altina, and encrusted with a gilt mosaic, like that which covers our Edward the Confessor's tomb. The pavement, composed of various precious marbles, is richer and more beautiful than one could have expected, in a place where every other object savours of the grossest barbarism. At the farther end, beyond the altar, appears a semicircular niche, with seats like the gradines of a diminutive amphitheatre; above rise the quaint forms of the apostles; in red, blue, green, and black mosaic, and in the midst of the group a sort of marble chair, cool and penitential enough, where Saint Lorenzo Giustiniani sat to hold a provincial council, the Lord knows how long ago! The fount for holy water stands by the principal entrance, fronting this curious recess, and seems to have belonged to some place of Gentile worship. The figures of orned imps clinging round its sides, more devilish, more Egyptian, than any I ever beheld. The dragons on old china are not more whimsical; filled with bats' blood it would have been an admirable present to the sabbath of witches, and have cut a capital figure in their orgies. The sculpture is not the most delicate, but I cannot say a great deal about it, as very little light reaches the spot where it is fixed: indeed, the whole church is far from luminous, its windows being narrow and near the roof, with shutters composed of blocks of marble, which nothing but the whirlwinds of the last day, one should think, would move from their hinges.

By the time we had examined every nook and corner of this singular edifice, and tried to catch some small portion of sanctity by sitting in San Lorenzo's chair, dinner was prepared in a neighbouring convent, and the nuns, allured by the sound of our flutes and oboes, peeped out of their cells and shewed themselves by dozens at the grate. Some few agreeable faces and interesting eyes enlivened the dark sisterhood; all seemed to catch a gleam of pleasure from the music; two or three of them, probably

the last immured, let fall a tear, and suffered the recollection of the world and its profane joys to interrupt for a moment their sacred tranquillity.

We stayed till the sun was low, on purpose that they might listen as long as possible to a harmony which seemed to issue, as the old abbess expressed herself, from the gates of paradise ajar. A thousand benedictions consecrated our departure; twilight came on just as we entered the bark and rowed out upon the waves, agitated by a fresh gale, but fearing nothing under the protection of Santa Margherita, whose good wishes our music had secured.

In two hours we were safely landed at the *Fondamenti nuovi*, and went immediately to the *Mendicanti*, where they were performing the oratorio of *Sisera*. The composer, a young man, had displayed great fire and originality in this performance; and a knowledge of character seldom found in the most celebrated masters. The supplication of the thirsty chieftain, and Jael's insinuating arts and pious treachery, are admirably expressed, but the agitation and boding slumbers which precede his death, are imagined in the highest strain of genius. The terror and agony of his dreams made me start, more than once, from my seat; and all the horrors of his assassination seemed full before me.

Too much applause cannot be given to the *Marchetti*; who sang the part of *Sisera*, and seconded the composer's ideas by the most feeling and spirited execution. There are few things I shall regret more on leaving Venice, than this conservatorio. Whenever I am musically given, I fly to it, and hear the most striking finales in *Paesiello's* and *Anfossi's* operas, as long and often as I please.

The sight of the orchestra still makes me smile. You know, I suppose, it is entirely of the feminine gender, and that nothing is more common than to see a delicate white hand journeying across an enormous double bass, or a pair of roseate cheeks puffing, with all their efforts, at a French horn. Some that are grown old and Ama-

zonian, who have abandoned their fiddles and their lovers, take vigorously to the kettle-drum; and one poor limping lady, who had been crossed in love, now makes an admirable figure on the bassoon.

Good night! I am quite exhausted with composing a chorus for this angelic choir. The poetry I send you. The music takes up too much room to travel at present. One day or other, perhaps, we may hear it in some dark grove, when the moon is eclipsed and nature in alarm.

This is not the last letter you would receive from Venice were I not hurrying to Lucca, where Pacchierotti sings next week, in Berton's opera of Quinto Fabio.

LETTER VII.

Coast of Fusina. — The Brenta. — A Village of Palaces. — Fiesso. — Exquisite singing of the Galuzzi. — Marietta Cornaro. — Scenes of enchantment and fascination.

I was sorry to leave Venice, and regretted my peaceful excursions upon the Adriatic. No bright rays illuminated my departure, the sun was concealed in clouds but the coolness and perfume of the air made ample amends for his absence.

About an hour's rowing from the isle of Saint Giorgio in Alga, brought us to the coast of Fusina, right opposite the opening where the Brenta mixes with the sea. This river flows calmly between banks of verdure, crowned by poplars, with vines twining round every stalk, and depending from tree to tree in beautiful festoons. Beds of mint and iris clothe the brink of the stream, except where interrupted by a tall growth of reeds and osiers. The morning continued to lower as we advanced; scarce a wind ventured to breathe; all was still and placid as the surface of the river. No sound struck my ears except the bargemen hallooing to open the sluices, and deepen the water.

As yet I had not perceived an habitation, nor an

other object than green inclosures and fields of Turkish corn, shaded with vines and poplars. It grew late before we glided along by the Mira, a village of palaces, whose courts and gardens, as magnificent as statues, terraces and vases can make them, are far from composing a rural prospect

Such artificial scenery not engaging much of my attention, we stayed no longer than our dinner required, and reached the Dolo an hour before sunset. Passing the great sluices, whose gates opened with a thundering noise, we continued our course along the peaceful Brenta, winding its broad full stream through impenetrable copses. Day was about to close when we reached Fiesso; and it being a misty evening, I could scarcely distinguish the pompous façade of the Pisani palace. That of Cornaro, where we were engaged to sup, looks upon a broad mass of foliage which I contemplated with pleasure as it sank in the dusk.

We walked along while under a pavilion stretched before the entrance, breathing the freshness of the wood after a shower which had lately fallen. The Galuzzi sang some of her father Ferandini's compositions with surprising energy; her cheek was flushed, her eyes glistened; the whole tone of her countenance was that of a person rapt and inspired. I forgot both time and place while she was singing. The night stole imperceptibly away, before I awoke from my trance.

I do not recollect ever to have passed an evening, which every circumstance conspired to render so full of charm. In general, my musical pleasures suffer terrible abatements from the phlegm and stupidity of my neighbourhood; but here, every one seemed to catch the flame, and to listen with reciprocal delight. Marietta Cornaro, whose lively talents are the boast of the Venetians, threw quick around her the glancing fires of genius.

What with the song of the Galuzzi, and those intellectual meteors, I scarcely knew to what element I was transported, and doubted for several moments, whether I was not fallen into a celestial dream: to wake was painful, and it was not without much lingering reluctance I left these scenes of enchantment and fascination, repeating with melancholy earnestness that pathetic sonnet of Petrarch's—

O giorno, o ora, o ultimo momento,
O stelle congiurate a' impoverirme!
O fido sguardo, or che volei tu dirme,
Partend' io, per non esser mai contento?

LETTER VIII.

Reveries. — Walls of Padua. — Confused Pile dedicated to Saint Anthony. — Devotion at his Shrine. — Penitential Worshippers. — Magnificent Altar. — Sculpture of Sansovino. — Colossal Chamber like Noah's Ark.

The splendour, of the rising sun, for once in my life, drew little of my attention. I was too deeply plunged in my reveries, to notice the landscape which lay before me; and the walls of Padua presented themselves some time ere I was aware. At any other moment, how sensibly should I have been affected with their appearance! How many ideas of Antenor and his Trojans, would have thronged into my memory! but now I regarded the scene with indifference, and passed many a palace, and many a woody garden with my eyes riveted to the ground. The first object that appeared upon lifting them up, was a confused pile of spires and cupolas, dedicated to blessed Saint Anthony, one of whose most eloquent sermons the great Addison has translated *con amore*, and in his very best manner.

You are too well apprized of the veneration I have always entertained for this inspired preacher, to doubt that I immediately repaired to his shrine. Mine was a disturbed spirit, and required all the balm of Saint Anthony's kind-

ness to appease it. Perhaps you will say I had better have gone to bed, and applied myself to my sleepy friend, the pagan divinity. It is probable that you are in the right; but I could not retire to rest without first venting some portion of effervescence in sighs and supplications. The nave was filled with decrepit women and feeble children, kneeling by baskets of vegetables and other provisions: which, by good Antony's interposition, they hoped to sell advantageously in the course of the day. Beyond these, nearer the choir, and in a gloomier part of the edifice, knelt a row of rueful penitents, smiting their breasts, and lifting their eyes to heaven. Further on, in front of the dark recess, where the sacred relics are deposited, a few desperate, melancholy sinners lay prostrate.

To these I joined myself. The sunbeams had not yet penetrated into this religious quarter; and the only light it received proceeded from the golden lamps which hang in clusters round the sanctuary. A lofty altar, decked with the most lavish magnificence, supports the shrine. Those who are profoundly touched with its sanctity, may approach, and walking round, look through the crevices of the tomb, which, it is observed, exude a balsamic odour. But supposing a traveller ever so heretical, I would advise him by no means to neglect this pilgrimage; since every part of the recess he visits, is decked with exquisite sculptures. Sansovino, and other renowned artists have vied with each other in carving the alto relievos of the arcade, which, for design and execution, would do honour to the sculptors of antiquity.

Having observed these objects with less exactness than they merited, I hastened to the inn, luckily hard by, and one of the best I am acquainted with. Here I soon fell asleep in defiance of sunshine. It is true my slumbers were not a little agitated. The saint had been deaf to my prayer, and I still found myself a frail, infatuated mortal.

At five I got up; we dined, and afterwards scarcely knowing, nor much caring, what became of us, we strol-

led to the great hall of the town ; an enormous edifice, larger considerably than that of Westminster, but free from stalls, or shops, or nests of litigation. The roof, one spacious vault of brown timber, casts a solemn gloom, which was still increased by the lateness of the hour, and not diminished by the wan light, admitted through the windows of pale blue glass. The size and shape of this colossal chamber, the arching of the roof, with enormous rafters stretching across it ; and, above all, the watery gleams that glanced through the dull casements, possessed my fancy with ideas of Noah's ark, and almost persuaded me I beheld that extraordinary vessel. The representation one sees of it in many an old Dutch Bible, seems to be formed upon this very model, and for several moments I indulged the chimera of imagining myself confined within its precincts. Could I but choose my companions, I should have no great objection to encounter a deluge, to float away a few months upon the waves !

We remained till night walking to and fro in the ark ; it was then full time to retire, as the guardian of the place was by no means formed to divine our diluvian ideas.

LETTER IX.

Church of St. Justina. — Tombs of remote antiquity. — Ridiculous attitudes of rheumatic devotees. — Torini's music. — Another excursion to Fiesse. — Journey to the Euganean hills. — Newly discovered ruins. — High Mass in the great Church of Saint Anthony. — A thunder-storm. — Palladio's Theatre at Vicenza. — Verona. — An aerial chamber. — Striking prospect from it. — The amphitheatre. — Its interior. — Leave Verona. — Country between that town and Mantua. — German soldiers. — Remains of the palace of the Gonzagas. — Paintings of Julio Romano. — A ruined garden. — Subterranean apartments.

Immediately after breakfast we went to St. Justina's. Both extremities of the cross aisles are terminated by altar-tombs of very remote antiquity, adorned with uncouth sculptures of the evangelists, supported by wreathed columns of alabaster, round which, to my no small astonishment, four or five gawky fellows were waddling

on their knees, persuaded, it seems, that this strange devotion could cure the rheumatism, or any other aches with which they were afflicted. You can have no conception of the ridiculous attitudes into which they threw themselves; nor the difficulty with which they squeezed along, between the middle column of the tomb and those which surround it. No criminal in the pillory ever exhibited a more rueful appearance, no swine ever scrubbed itself more fervently than these infatuated ladders.

I left them hard at work, taking more exercise than had been their lot for many a day; and, mounting into the organ gallery, listened to Turini's * music with infinite satisfaction. The loud harmonious tones of the instrument filled the whole edifice; and, being repeated by the echoes of its lofty domes and arches, produced a wonderful effect. Turini, aware of this circumstance, adapts his compositions, with great intelligence, to the place. Nothing can be more original than his style. Deprived of sight by an unhappy accident, in the flower of his days, he gave up his entire soul to music, and can scarcely be said to exist, but from its medium.

When we came out of St. Justina's, the azure of the sky and the softness of the air inclined us to think of some excursion. Where could I wish to go, but to the place in which I had been so delighted? Besides, it was proper to make the Cornaro another visit, and proper to see the Pisini palace, which happily I had before neglected. All the proprieties considered, Madame de R. accompanied me to Fiesso.

The sun was just sunk when we arrived. The whole ether in a glow, and the fragrance of the arched citron alleys delightful. Beneath them I walked in the cool, till the Galuzzi began once more her enchanting melody. She sang till the fineness of the weather tempted us to quit the palace for the banks of the Brenta. A profound calm reigned upon the woods and the waters, and moonlight added serenity to a scene naturally peaceful.

* A nephew of Bortoni, the celebrated composer.

We supped late : before the Galuzzi had repeated the airs which had most affected me, morning began to dawn.

September 8th.

The want of sound repose, after my return home, had thrown me into a feverish and impatient mood. I had scarcely snatched some slight refreshment, before I flew to the great organ at St. Justina's, but tried this time to compose myself, in vain.

Madame de Rosenberg, finding my endeavours unsuccessful, proposed, by way of diverting my attention, that we should set out immediately for one of the Euganean hills, about six or seven miles from Padua, at the foot of which some antique baths had been very lately discovered. I consented without hesitation, little concerned whither I went, or what happened to me, provided the scene was often shifted. The lanes and inclosures we passed, in our road to the hills, appeared in all the gaiety that verdure, flowers, and sunshine could give them. But my pleasures were overcast, and I beheld every object, however cheerful, through a dusky medium.

Deeply engaged in conversation, distance made no impression, and I found myself entering the meadow, over which the ruins are scattered, whilst I imagined myself several miles distant. No scene could be more smiling than this which here presented itself, or answer, in a fuller degree, the ideas I had always formed of Italy.

Leaving our carriage at the entrance of the meadow we traversed its surface, and shortly perceived among the grass, an oblong basin, incrustated with pure white marble. Most of the slabs are large and perfect, apparently brought from Greece, and still retaining their polished smoothness. The pipes to convey the waters are still perfectly discernible; in short, the whole ground-plan may be easily traced. Near the principal bath,

we remarked the platforms of several circular apartments, paved with mosaic, in a neat simple taste, far from inelegant. Weeds have not yet sprung up amongst the crevices; and the freshness of the ruin everywhere shows that it has not long been exposed.

Theodoric is the prince to whom these structures are attributed; and Cassiodorus, the prime chronicler of the country, is quoted to maintain the supposition. My spirit was too much engaged to make any learned parade, or to dispute upon a subject, which I abandon, with all its importance, to calmer and less impatient minds.

Having taken a cursory view of the ruins, we ascended the hill just above them, and surveyed a prospect of the same nature, though in a more lovely and expanded style than that which I beheld from Mosolento. Padua crowns the landscape, with its towers and cupolas rising from a continued grove, and, from the drawings I have seen, I should conjecture that Damascus presents somewhat of a similar appearance.

Taking our eyes off this extensive prospect, we brought them home to the fragments beneath our feet. The walls exhibit the *opus reticulatum*, so common in the environs of Naples. A sort of terrace, with the remaining bases of columns which encircle the hill, leads me to imagine here were formerly arcades and porticoes, constructed for enjoying the view; for on the summit I could trace no vestiges of any considerable edifice, and am therefore inclined to conclude, that nothing more than a colonnade surrounded the hill, leading perhaps to some slight fane, or pavilion, for the recreation of the bathers below.

A profusion of aromatic flowers covered the slopes, and exhaled additional perfumes, as the sun declined, and the still hour approached, which was wont to spread over my mind a divine composure, and to restore the tranquillity I might have lost in the day. But now it diffused its reviving coolness in vain, and I remained, if possible, more sad and restless than before.

September 10th.

You may imagine how I felt when the hour of leaving Padua drew near. It happened to be a festival, and high mass was celebrated at the great church of Saint Anthony in all its splendour. The ceremony was about half over when such a peal of thunder reverberated through the vaults and cupolas, as I expected would have shaken them to their foundation. The principal dome appeared invested with a sheet of fire; and the effect of terror produced upon the majority of the congregation, by this sudden lighting up of the most gloomy recesses of the edifice, was so violent that they rushed out in the wildest confusion. Had my faith been less lively, I should have followed their example, but, absorbed in the thought of a separation from those to whom I felt fondly attached, I remained till the ceremony ended; then took leave of Madame de R. with heartfelt regret, and was driven away to Vicenza.

September 10th.

The morning being overcast, I went to Palladio's. It is impossible to conceive a structure more truly classical, or to point out a single ornament which has not the best antique authority. I am not in the least surprised that the citizens of Vicenza enthusiastically gave into this great architect's plan, and sacrificed large sums to erect so beautiful a model. When finished, they procured, at a vast expense, the representation of a Grecian tragedy, with its chorus and majestic decorations.

After I had mused a long while in the most retired recess of the edifice, fancying I had penetrated into a real and perfect monument of antiquity, which till this moment had remained undiscovered, we set out for Verona. The situation is striking and picturesque. A long line of battlemented walls, flanked by venerable towers, mounts the hill in a grand irregular sweep, and incloses the city

with many a woody garden, and grove of slender cypress. Beyond rises a group of mountains; opposite to which a plain presents itself, decked with all the variety of meads and thickets, olive-grounds, and vineyards.

Amongst these our road kept winding till we entered the city gate, and passed (the post knows how many streets and alleys in the way! to the inn, a lofty handsome-looking building; but so full that we were obliged to take up with an apartment on its very summit, open to all the winds, like the magic chamber Apuleius mentions, and commanding the roofs of half Verona. Here and there a pine shot up amongst them, and the shady hills terminating the perspective of walls and turrets, formed a romantic scene.

Placing our table in a balcony, to enjoy the prospect with greater freedom, we feasted upon fish from the Lago di Guarda, and the delicious fruits of the country. Thus did I remain, solacing myself, breathing the cool air, and remarking the tints of the mountains. Neither paintings nor antiques could tempt me from my aerial situation; I refused hunting out the famous works of Paul Veronese scattered over the town, and sat like the owl in the Georgics.

Solis et occasum servans de culmine summo.

Twilight drawing on, I left my haunt, and stealing down stairs, enquired for a guide to conduct me to the amphitheatre, perhaps the most entire monument of Roman days. The people of the house, instead of bringing me a quiet peasant, officiously delivered me up to a professed antiquary, one of those precise plausible young men, to whom, God help me! I have so capital an aversion. This sweet spark displayed all his little erudition, and flourished away upon cloacas and vomitoriums with eternal fluency. He was very profound in the doctrine of conduits, and knew to admiration how the filthiness of all the amphitheatre was disposed of.

But perceiving my inattention, and having just grace

enough to remark that I chose one side of the street when he preferred the other, and sometimes trotted through despair in the kennel, he made me a pretty bow, I threw him half-a-crown, and seeing the ruins before me, traversed a gloomy arcade and emerged alone into the arena. A smooth turf covers its surface, from which a spacious sweep of gradines rises to a majestic elevation. Four arches, with their simple Doric ornament, alone remain of the grand circular arcade which once crowned the highest seats of the amphitheatre; and, had it not been for Gothic violence, this part of the structure would have equally resisted the ravages of time. Nothing can be more exact than the preservation of the gradines; not a block has sunk from its place, and whatever trifling injuries they may have received have been carefully repaired. The two chief entrances are rebuilt with solidity and closed by portals, no passage being permitted through the amphitheatre except at public shows and representations, sometimes still given in the arena.

When I paced slowly across it, silence reigned undisturbed, and nothing moved, except the weeds and grasses which skirt the walls and tremble with the faintest breeze. Throwing myself upon the grass in the middle of the arena, I enjoyed the freedom of my situation, its profound stillness and solitude. How long I remained shut in by endless gradines on every side, wrapped as it were in the recollections of perished ages, is not worth noting down; but when I passed from the amphitheatre to the opening before it, night was drawing on, and the grand outline of a terrific feudal fortress, once inhabited by the Scaligeri, alone dimly visible.

September 11th.

Traversing once more the grand piazza, and casting a last glance upon the amphitheatre, we passed under a lofty arch which terminates the perspective, and left Verona by a wide, irregular, picturesque street, com-
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manding, whenever you look back, a striking scene of towers; cypress, and mountains.

The country, between this beautiful town and Mantua, presents one continued grove of dwarfish mulberries, with here and there a knot of poplars, and sometimes a miserable shed. Mantua itself rises out of a morass formed by the Mincio, whose course, in most places, is so choked up with reeds as to be scarcely discernible. It requires a creative imagination to discover any charms in such a prospect, and a strong prepossession not to be disgusted with the scene where Virgil was born.

The beating of drums; and sight of German whisksers finished what croaking frogs and stagnant ditches had begun. Every classic idea being scared by such sounds and such objects, I dined in dudgeon, and refused stirring out till late in the evening.

A few paces from the town stand the remains of the palace where the Gonzagas formerly resided. This I could not resist looking at, and was amply rewarded. Several of the apartments, adorned by the bold pencil of Julio Romano, merit the most exact attention; and the arabesques, with which the stucco ceilings are covered, equal those of the Vatican. Being painted in fresco upon damp neglected walls, each year diminishes their number, and every winter moulders some beautiful figure away.

The subjects, mostly from antique fables, are treated with all the purity and gracefulness of Raphael; the story of Polypheme is very conspicuous. Acis appears, reclined with his beloved Galatea, on the shore of the ocean, whilst their gigantic enemy, seated above on the brow of *Ætna*, seems by the paleness and horrors of his countenance to meditate some terrible revenge.

When it was too late to examine the paintings any longer, I walked into a sort of court, or rather garden, which had been decorated with fountains and antique statues. Their fragments still remain amongst weeds and beds of flowers, for every corner of the place is smothered with vegetation. Here nettles grow thick and

rampant; there, tuberoses and jessamine spring from mounds of ruins, which during the elegant reign of the Gonzagas led to grottoes and subterranean apartments, concealed from vulgar eyes, and sacred to the most refined enjoyments.

LETTER X.

Cross the Po. — A woody country. — The Vintage. — Reggio. — Ridge of the Apennines. — Romantic ideas connected with those mountains. — Arrive at Modena. — Road to Bologna. — Magnificent Convent of Madonna del Monte. — Natural and political commotions in Bologna. — Proceed towards the mountains. — Dreary prospects. — The scenery improves. — Herds of goats. — A run with them. — Return to the carriage. — Wretched hamlet. — Miserable repast.

September 12th, 1780.

A shower having fallen, the air was refreshed, and the drops still glittered upon the vines, through which our road conducted us. Three or four miles from Mantua the scene changed to extensive grounds of rice, and meads of the tenderest verdure watered by springs, whose frequent meanders gave to the whole prospect the appearance of a vast green carpet shot with silver. Further on we crossed the Po, and passing Guastalla, entered a woody country full of inclosures and villages; herds feeding in the meadows, and poultry parading before every wicket.

The peasants were busied in winnowing their corn; or, mounted upon the elms and poplars, gathering the rich clusters from the vines that hang streaming in braids from one branch to another. I was surprised to find myself already in the midst of the vintage, and to see every road crowded with carts and baskets bringing it along; you cannot imagine a pleasanter scene.

Round Reggio it grew still more lively, and on the other side of that sketch-inviting little city, I remarked many a cottage that Tityrus might have inhabited, with its garden and willow hedge in flower, swarming with bees. Our road, the smoothest conceivable, enabled

us to pass too rapidly through so cheerful a landscape. I caught glimpses of fields and copses as we were driven along, that could have afforded me amusement for hours, and orchards on gentle acclivities, beneath which I could have walked till evening. The trees literally bent under their loads of fruit, and innumerable ruddy apples lay scattered upon the ground.

Beyond these rich masses of foliage, to which the sun lent additional splendour, at the utmost extremity of the pastures, rose the irregular ridge of the Apennines, whose deep blue presented a striking contrast to the glowing colours of the foreground. I fixed my eyes on the chain of distant mountains, and indulged a thousand romantic conjectures of what was passing in their recesses — hermits absorbed in prayer — beautiful Contadine fetching water from springs, and banditti conveying their victims, perhaps at this very moment, to caves and fastnesses.

Such were the dreams that filled my fancy, and kept it incessantly employed till it was dusk, and the moon began to show herself; the same moon which but a few nights ago had seen me so happy at Fiesso. I left the carriage, and running into the dim haze, abandoned myself to the recollections it excited.

At length, having wandered where chance or the wildness of my fancy led, till the lateness of the evening alarmed me, I regained the chaise as fast as I could, and arrived between twelve and one at Modena, the place of my destination.

September 13th.

We traversed a champagne country in our way to Bologna, whose richness and fertility increased in proportion as we drew near that celebrated mart of lap-dogs and sausages. A chain of hills commands the city, variegated with green inclosures and villas innumerable. On the highest acclivity of this range appears the magnificent convent of Madonna del monte, embosomed in wood and joined to the town by a corridor a league in

lentgh. This vast portico ascending the steeps and winding amongst the thickets, sometimes concealed and sometimes visible, produces an effect wonderfully grand and singular. I longed to have mounted the height by so extraordinary a passage; and hope on some future day to be better acquainted with Santa Maria del Monte.

At present I have very little indeed to say about Bologna (where I passed only two hours) except that it is sadly out of humour, an earthquake and Cardinal Buoncompagni having dissarranged both land and people. For half-a-year the ground continued trembling; and for these last six months, the legate and senators have grumbled and scratched incessantly; so that, between natural and polical commotions, the Bolognese must have passed an agreeable summer.

Such a report of the situation of things, you may suppose, was not likely to retard my journey. I put off delivering my letters to another opportunity, and proceeded immediately after dinner towards the mountains. We were soon in the midst of crags and stony channels, that stream with ten thousand rills in the winter season, but during the summer months reflect every sunbeam, and harbour half the scorpions in the country.

For many a toilsome league our prospect consisted of nothing but dreary hillocks and intervening wastes, more barren and mournful than those to which Mary Magdalene retired. Sometimes a crucifix or chapel peeped out of the parched fern and grasses, with which these desolate fields are clothed; and now and then we met a goggle-eyed pilgrim trudging along, and staring about him as if he waited only for night and opportunity to have additional reasons for hurrying to Loreto.

During three or four hours that we continued ascending, the scene increased in sterility and desolation; but, at the end of our second post, the landscape began to alter for the better: little green valleys at the base of tremendous steeps, discovered themselves, scattered over with oaks, and freshened with running waters, which the nakedness of the impending rocks set off to advantage. The sides of

the cliffs in general consist of rude mis-shapen masses ; but their summits are smooth and verdant, and continually browsed by herds of white goats, which were gamboling on the edge of the precipices as we passed beneath.

I joined one of these frisking assemblies, whose shadows were stretched by the setting sun along the level herbage. There I sat a few minutes while they shook their beards at me, and tried to scare me with all their horns. Being tired with skipping and butting at me in vain, the whole herd trotted away, and I after them. They led me a dance from crag to crag, and from thicket to thicket.

It was growing dusky apace, and wreaths of smoke began to ascend from the mysterious depths of the valleys. I was ignorant what monster inhabited such retirements, so gave over my pursuit lest some Polypheme or other might make me repent it. I looked around, the carriage was out of sight ; but hearing the neighing of horses at a distance, I soon came up with them, and mounted another rapid ascent, from whence an extensive tract of cliff and forest land was discernible.

A chill wind blew from the highest peak of the Apennines, and made a dismal rustle amongst the woods of chestnut that hung on the mountain's side, through which we were forced to pass. Walking out of the sound of the carriage, I began interpreting the language of the leaves, not greatly to my own advantage or that of any being in the universe. I was no prophet of good, and had I but commanded an oracle, as ancient visionaries were wont, I should have flung mischief about me.

How long I continued in this strange temper I cannot pretend to say ; but believe it was midnight before we emerged from the oracular forest, and saw faintly before us an assemblage of miserable huts, where we were to sleep. This wretched hamlet it suspended on the brow of a bleak mountain, and every gust that stirs, shakes the whole village to its foundations. At our approach, two hags stalked forth with lanterns, and invited us with a grin, which I shall always remember, to a dish of mustard and crows' gizzards, a dish I was more than half afraid of tasting, lest

it should change me to some bird of darkness, condemned to mope eternally on the black rafters of the cottage.

After repeated supplications, we procured a few eggs, and some faggots to make a fire. Pitching my bed in a warm corner, I soon fell asleep, and forgot all my cares and inquietudes.

LETTER XI.

A sterile region. — Our descent into a milder landscape. — Distant view of Florence. — Moonlight effect. — Visit the Gallery. — Relics of ancient credulity. — Paintings. — A Medusa's head by Leonardo da Vinci. — Curious picture by Polemberg. — The Venus de Medicis. — Exquisitely sculptured figure of Morpheus. — Vast Cathedral. — Garden of Boboli. — Views from different parts of it. — Its resemblance to an antique Roman garden.

September 14th, 1780.

The sun had not been long above the horizon, before we set forward upon a craggy pavement, hewn out of rough cliffs and precipices. Scarcely a tree was visible, and the few that presented themselves began already to shed their leaves. The raw nipping air of this desert with difficulty spares a blade of vegetation; and in the whole range of these extensive eminences I could not discover a single corn-field or pasture. Inhabitants, you may guess, there were none. I would defy even a Scotch highlander to find means of subsistence in so rude a soil.

Towards mid-day we had surmounted the dreariest part of our journey, and began to perceive a milder landscape. The climate improved as well as the prospect, and after a continual descent of several hours, we saw groves and villages in the dips of the hills, and met a string of mules and horses laden with fruit. I purchased some figs and peaches from this little caravan, and spread my repast upon a bank, in the midst of lavender bushes in full bloom.

Continuing our route, we bade adieu to the realms of poverty and barrenness, and entered a cultivated vale, shaded by woody acclivities. Amongst these we wound along, between groves of poplars and cypress, till late in the eve-

ning. Upon winding a hill, we discovered Florence at a distance, surrounded with gardens and terraces rising one above another; the full moon seemed to shine with a peculiar charm upon this favoured region. Her serene light on the pale grey of the olive, gave a visionary and Elysian appearance to the landscape, and I was sorry when I found myself excluded from it by the gates of Florence.

I slept as well as my impatience would allow, till it was time next morning (Sept. 13), to visit the gallery, and worship the Venus de Medicis. I felt, upon entering this world of refinement, as if I could have taken up my abode in it for ever; but, confused with the multitude of objects, I knew not on which first to bend my attention, and ran childishly by the ample ranks of sculptures, like a butterfly in a parterre, that skims, before it fixes, over ten thousand flowers.

Having taken my course down one side of the gallery, I turned the angle, and discovered another long perspective, equally stored with master pieces of bronze and marble. A minute brought me to the extremity of this range, vast as it was; then, flying down a third, adorned in the same delightful manner, I paused under the bust of Jupiter Olympius, and began to reflect a little more maturely upon the company in which I found myself. Opposite, appeared the majestic features of Minerva, breathing divinity; and Cybele, the mother of the gods.

Having regarded these powers with due veneration, I next cast my eyes upon a black figure, whose attitude seemed to announce the deity of sleep. You know my fondness for this drowsy personage, and that it is not the first time I have quitted the most splendid society for him. I found him, at present, of touchstone, with the countenance of a towardly brat, sleeping ill through indigestion. The artist had not conceived very poetical ideas of the god, or else he never would have represented him with so little grace and dignity.

Displeased at finding my favourite subject profaned, I perceived the transports of enthusiasm beginning to subside, and felt myself calm enough to follow the herd of guides


and spectators from chamber to chamber, cabinet to cabinet, without falling into errors of rapture and admiration. We were led slowly and moderately through the large rooms, containing the portraits of painters, good, bad, and indifferent, from Raphael to Liotard; then into a museum of bronzes, which would afford both amusement and instruction for years.

When I had rather alarmed than satisfied my curiosity by rapidly running over a multitude of candelabrams, urns, and sacred utensils, we entered a small luminous apartment, surrounded with cases richly decorated, and filled with the most exquisite models of workmanship in bronze and various metals, classed in exact order. Here are crowds of diminutive deities and tutelary lars to whom the superstition of former days attributed those midnight murmurs which were believed to presage the misfortunes of a family. Amongst these now neglected images are preserved a vast number of talismans, cabalistic amulets, and other grotesque relics of ancient credulity.

In the centre of the room I remarked a table, beautifully formed of polished gems, and, near it, the statue of a genius with his familiar serpent, and all his attributes; the guardian of the treasured antiquities. From this chamber we were conducted into another, which opens to that part of the gallery where the busts of Adrian and Antoninus are placed. Two pilasters, delicately carved in trophies and clusters of ancient armour, stand on each side of the entrance; within are several perfumed cabinets of miniatures, and a single column of oriental alabaster about ten feet in height.

Lucido e terso, e bianco, più che latte.

I put my guide's patience to the proof, by lingering to admire the column and cabinets. At last, the musk with which they are impregnated, obliged me to desist, and I moved on to a suite of saloons, with low arched roofs, glittering with arabesque, in azure and gold. Several medallions appear amongst the wreaths of foliage, tolera-



bly well painted, with representations of splendid feasts and tournaments for which Florence was once so famous.

A vast collection of small pictures, most of them Flemish, covers the walls of these apartments. But nothing struck me more than a Medusa's head by Leonardo da Vinci. It appears just severed from the body and cast on the damp pavement of a cavern: a deadly paleness covers the countenance, and the mouth exhales a pestilential vapour; the snakes, which fill almost the whole picture, beginning to untwist their folds; one or two seemed already crept away, and crawling up the rock in company with toads and other venomous reptiles.

Here are a great many Polembergs: one, in particular, the strangest I ever beheld. Instead of those soft scenes of woods and waterfalls he is in general so fond of representing, he has chosen for his subject Virgil ushering Dante into the regions of eternal punishment, amidst the ruins of flaming edifices that glare across the infernal waters. These mournful towers harbour innumerable shapes, all busy in preying upon the damned. One capital devil, in the form of an enormous lobster, seems very strenuously employed in mumbing a miserable mortal, who sprawls, though in vain, to escape from his claws. This performance whimsical as it is, retains all that softness of tint and delicacy of pencil for which Polemberg is so renowned.

Had not the subject so palpably contradicted the painter's choice, I should have passed over this picture, like a thousand more, and have brought you immediately to the tribune. Need I say I was spell-bound the moment I set my feet within it, and saw full before me the Venus de Medicis? The warm ivory hue of the original marble is a beauty no copy has ever imitated, and the softness of the limbs exceeded the liveliest idea I had formed to myself of their perfection.

When I had taken my eyes reluctantly away from this beautiful object, I cast them upon a Morpheus of white marble, which lies slumbering at the feet of the goddess in the form of a graceful child. A dormant lion serves

him for a pillow; two ample wings, carved with the utmost delicacy, are gathered under him; two others, budding from his temples, half-concealed by a flow of lovely ringlets. His languid hands scarcely hold a bunch of poppies: near him creeps a lizard just yielding to his influence. Nothing can be more just than the expression of sleep in the countenance of the little divinity. His lion too is perfectly lulled, and rests his muzzle upon his fore paws as quiet as a domestic spaniel. My ill-humour at seeing this deity so grossly sculptured in the gallery, was dissipated by the gracefulness of his appearance in the tribune. I was now contented, for the artist had realized my ideas; and, if I may venture my opinion, sculpture never arrived to higher perfection, and, at the same time, kept more justly within its province. Sleeping figures with me always produce the finest illusion; but when I see an archer in the very act of discharging his arrow, a dancer with one foot in the air or a gladiator extending his fist to all eternity, I grow tired, and view such wearisome attitudes with infinitely more admiration than pleasure.

The morning was gone before I could snatch myself from the tribune. In my way home, I looked into the cathedral, an enormous fabric, inlaid with the richest marbles, and covered with stars and chequered work, like an old-fashioned cabinet. The architect seems to have turned his building inside out; nothing in art being more ornamented than the exterior, and few churches so simple within. The nave is vast and solemn, the dome amazingly spacious, with the high altar in its centre, inclosed by a circular arcade near two hundred feet in diameter. There is something imposing in this decoration, as it suggests the idea of a sanctuary, into which none but the holy ought to penetrate. However profane I might feel myself, I took the liberty of entering, and sat down in a niche. Not a ray of light reaches this sacred inclosure, but through the medium of narrow windows, high in the dome, and richly painted. A sort of yellow tint predominates, which gives additional solemnity to the

altar, and paleness to the votary before it. I was sensible of the effect, and obtained at least the colour of sanctity.

Having remained some time in this pious hue, I returned home and feasted upon grapes and ortolans with great edification; then walked to one of the bridges across the Arno, and from thence to the garden of Boboli, which lies behind the Grand Duke's palace, stretched out on the side of a mountain. I ascended terrace after terrace, robed by a thick underwood of bay and myrtle, above which rise several nodding towers, and a long sweep of venerable wall, almost entirely concealed by ivy. You would have been enraptured with the broad masses of shade and dusky alleys that opened as I advanced, with white statues of fauns and sylvens glimmering amongst them; some of which pour water into sarcophagi of the purest marble, covered with antique relievos. The capitals of columns and ancient friezes are scattered about as seats.

On these I reposed myself, and looked up to the cypress groves which spring above the thickets; then, plunging into their retirements, I followed a winding path, which led me by a series of steep ascents to a green platform overlooking the whole extent of wood, with Florence deep beneath, and the tops of the hills which encircle it jagged with pines; here and there a convent, or villa, whitening in the sun. This scene extends as far as the eye can reach.

Still ascending, I attained the brow of the eminence, and had nothing but the fortress of Belvedere, and two or three open porticoes above me. On this elevated situation, I found several walks of trellis-work, clothed with luxuriant vines. A colossal statue of Ceres, her hands extended in the act of scattering fertility over the country, crowns the summit.

Descending alley after alley, and bank after bank, I came to the orangery in front of the palace, disposed in a grand amphitheatre, with marble niches relieved by dark foliage, out of which spring cedars and tall aerial

eypresses. This spot brought the scenery of an antique Roman garden so vividly into my mind, that, lost in the train of recollections this idea excited, I expected every instant to be called to the table of Lucullus hard by, in one of the porticoes, and to stretch myself on his purple triclinias: but waiting in vain for a summons till the approach of night, I returned delighted with a ramble that had led my imagination so far into antiquity.

LETTER XII.

Rambles among the hills. — Excursions with Pacchierotti. — He catches cold in the mountains. — The whole Republic is in commotion, and send a deputation to remonstrate with the Singer on his imprudence. — The Conte Nobili. — Hill scenery. — Princely Castle and Gardens of the Garzoni Family. — Colossal Statue of Fame. — Grove of *Ilex*. — Endless bowers of Vines. — Delightful Wood of the Marchese Mansi. — Return to Lucca.

Lucca, Sept. 25, 1780.

You ask me how I pass my time. Generally upon the hills, in wild spots where the *arbutus* flourishes; from whence I may catch a glimpse of the distant sea; my horse tied to a cypress, and myself cast upon the grass, like Palmerin of Oliva, with a tablet and pencil in my hand, a basket of grapes by my side, and a crooked stick to shake down the chestnuts. I have bidden adieu, several days ago, to the visits, dinners, conversazioni, and glories of town, and only go thither in an evening, just time enough for the grand march which precedes Pacchierotti in Quinto Fabio. Sometime he accompanies me in my excursions, to the utter discontent of the Lucchese, who swear I shall ruin their Opera, by leading him such extravagant rambles amongst the mountains, and exposing him to the inclemency of winds and showers. One day they made a vehement remonstrance, but in vain; for the next, away we trotted over hill and dale, and stayed so late in the evening, that a cold and hoarseness were the consequence.

The whole republic was thrown into commotion, and

some of its prime ministers were deputed to harangue Pacchierotti upon the rides he had committed. Had the safety of their mighty state depended upon this imprudent excursion, they could not have vociferated with greater violence. You know I am rather energetic, and, to say truth, I had very nearly got into a scrape of importance, and drawn down the execrations of the Gonfalonier and all his council upon my head, by openly declaring our intention of taking, next morning, another ride over the rocks, and absolutely losing ourselves in the clouds which veil their acclivities. These terrible threats were put into execution, and yesterday we made a tour of about thirty miles upon the high lands, and visited a variety of castles and palaces.

The Conte Nobili, a noble Lucchese, born in Flanders and educated at Paris, was our conductor. He possesses great elegance of imagination, and a degree of sensibility rarely met with. The way did not appear tedious in such company. The sun was tempered by light clouds, and a soft autumnal haze rested upon the hills, covered with shrubs and olives. The distant plains and forests appeared tinted with so deep a blue, that I began to think the azure so prevalent in Velvet Breughel's landscapes is hardly exaggerated.

After riding for six or seven miles along the cultivated levels, we began to ascend a rough slope, overgrown with chestnuts; a great many loose fragments and stumps of ancient pomegranates perplexed our route, which continued, turning and winding through this wilderness, till it opened on a sudden to the side of a lofty mountain, covered with tufted groves, amongst which hangs the princely castle of the Garzoni, on the very side of a precipice.

Alcina could not have chosen a more romantic situation. The garden lies extended beneath, gay with flowers, and glittering with compartments of spar, which, though in no great purity of taste, strikes for the first time with the effect of enchantment. large marble basins, with jets-d'eau, seventy feet in height, divide the par-

terres; from the extremity of which rises a rude cliff, shaded with cedar and ilex, and cut into terraces.

Leaving our horses at the great gate of this magic enclosure, we passed through the spray of the fountains, and mounting an endless flight of steps, entered an alley of oranges, and gathered ripe fruit from the trees. Whilst we were thus employed, the sun broke from the clouds, and lighted up the green of the vegetation; at the same time spangling the waters, which pour copiously down a succession of rocky terraces, and sprinkle the impending citrontrees with perpetual dew. These streams issue from a chasm in the cliff, surrounded by cypresses, which conceal by their thick branches a pavilion with baths. Above arises a colossal statue of Fame, boldly carved, and in the very act of starting from the precipices. A narrow path leads up to the feet of the goddess, on which I reclined; whilst a vast column of water arching over my head, fell, without even wetting me with its spray, into the depths below.

I could hardly prevail upon myself to abandon this cool recess, which the fragrance of hay and orange, maintained by constant showers, rendered uncommonly luxurious. At last I consented to move on, through a dark walk of ilex, which, to the credit of Signor Garzoni be it spoken, is suffered to grow as wild as it pleases. This grove is suspended on the mountain side, whose summit is clothed with a boundless wood of olives, and forms, by its willowy colour, a striking contrast with the deep verdure of its base.

After resting a few moments in the shade, we proceeded to a long avenue, bordered by aloes in bloom, forming majestic pyramids of flowers thirty feet high. This led us to the palace, which was soon run over. Then, mounting our horses, we wound amongst sunny vales, and inclosures with myrtle hedges, till we came to a rapid steep. We felt the heat most powerfully in ascending it, and were glad to take refuge under a continued bower of vines, which runs for miles along its summit. These arbours afforded us both shade and refreshment;

I fell upon the clusters which formed our ceiling, like a native of the north, unused to such luxuriance : one of those Goths, Gray so poetically describes, who

Scent the new fragrance of the breathing rose,
And quaff the pendent vintage as it grows.

I wish you had journeyed with us under this fruitful canopy, and observed the partial sunshine through its transparent leaves, and the glimpses of the blue sky it every now and then admitted. I say only every now and then, for in most places a sort of verdant gloom prevailed, exquisitely agreeable in so hot a day.

But such luxury did not last, you may suppose, for ever. We were soon forced from our covert, and obliged to traverse a mountain exposed to the sun, which had dispersed every cloud, and shone with intolerable brightness. On the other side of this extensive eminence lies a pastoral hillock, surrounded by others, woody and irregular. Wide vineyards and fields of Indian corn lay between, across which the Conte Nobili conducted us to his house, where we found prepared a very comfortable dinner. We drank the growth of the spot, and defied the richest wines of Constantia to exceed it.

Afterwards, retiring into a wood of the Marchese Mansi, with neat pebble walks and trickling rivulets, we took coffee and loitered till sunset. It was then time to return, as the mists were beginning to rise from the valleys. The calm and silence of evening threw us into our reveries. We went pacing along heedlessly, just as our horses pleased, without hearing any sound but their steps.

Between nine and ten we entered the gates of Luoca, Pacchierotti coughed, and half its inhabitants wished us at the devil.

LETTER XIII.

Set out for Pisa. — The Duomo. — Interior of the Cathedral. — The Campo Santo. — Solitude of the streets a midday. — Proceed to Leghorn. — Beauty of the road. — Tower of the Fanale.

Leghorn, October 2nd, 1780.

This morning we set out for Pisa. No sooner had we passed the highly cultivated garden-grounds about Lucca, than we found ourselves in narrow roads, shut in by vines and grassy banks of canes and osiers, rising high above our carriage and waving their leaves in the air. Through the openings which sometimes intervened we discovered a variety of hillocks clothed with shrubs, ruined towers looking out of the bushes, not one without a romantic tale attending it.

This sort of scenery lasted till, passing the baths, we beheld Pisa rising from an extensive plain, the most open we had as yet seen in Italy, crossed by an aqueduct. We were set down immediately before the Duomo, which stands insulated in a vast green area, and is perhaps the most curious edifice my eyes ever viewed. Do not ask of what shape or architecture; it is almost impossible to tell, so great is the confusion of ornaments. The dome gives the mass an oriental appearance, which helped to bewilder me; in short, I have dreamed of such buildings, but little thought they existed. On one side you survey the famous tower, as perfectly awry as I expected; on the other the baptistery, a circular edifice distinct from the church and right opposite its principal entrance, crowded with sculptures, and topped by the strangest of cupolas.

Having indulged our curiosity with this singular prospect for some moments, we entered the cathedral and admired the stately columns of porphyry and of the rarest marbles, supporting a roof which, like the rest of the building, shines with gold. A pavement of the brightest mosaic completes its magnificence: all around are sculptures by Michael Angelo Buonarroti, and paintings by the

most distinguished artists. We examined them with due attention, and then walked down the nave and remarked the striking effect of the baptistery, seen in perspective through the bronze portals, which you know, I suppose, are covered with relievos of the finest workmanship. These noble valves were thrown wide open, and we passed between them to the baptistery, where stands an alabaster font, constructed after the primitive ritual and exquisitely wrought.

Our next object was the Campo Santo, which forms one side of the area in which the cathedral is situated. The walls, and Gothic tabernacle above the entrance, rising from the level turf and preserving a neat straw colour, appear as fresh as if built within the present century. Our guide unlocking the gates, we entered a spacious cloister, forming an oblong quadrangle, which encloses the sacred earth of Jerusalem, conveyed hither about the period of the crusades, the days of Pisanese prosperity. The holy mould produces a rampant crop of weeds, but none are permitted to spring from the pavement, which is entirely composed of tombs with slabs, smoothly laid and covered with monumental inscriptions. Ranges of slender pillars, formed of the whitest marble glistening in the sun, support the arcade of the cloister, which is carved with innumerable stars and roses, partly Gothic and partly Saracenic. Strange paintings of hell and the devil, mostly taken from Dante's rhapsodies, cover the walls of these fantastic galleries, attributed to the venerable Giotto and Bufalmacco, whom Boccaccio mentions in his Decamerone.

Beneath, along the base of the columns, are placed, to my no small surprise, rows of pagan sarcophagi; I could not have supposed the Pisanese sufficiently tolerant to admit profane sculptures within such consecrated precincts. However, there they are, as well as fifty other contradictory ornaments.

I was quite seized by the strangeness of the place, and paced fifty times round and round the cloisters, discovering at every time some odd novelty. When tired, I sea-

ted myself on a fair slab of *giallo antico*, that looked a little cleaner than its neighbours (which I only mention to identify the precise point of view), and looking through the filigreed tracery of the arches, observed the domes of the cathedral, cupola of the baptistery, and roof of the leaning tower rising above the leads, and forming the strangest assemblage of pinnacles perhaps in Europe. The place is neither sad nor solemn; the arches are airy, the pillars light, and there is so much caprice, such an exotic look in the whole scene, that without any violent effort of fancy one might imagine one's self in fairy land. Every object is new, every ornament original; the mixture of antique sarcophagi with Gothic sepulchres, completes the vagaries of the prospect, to which, one day or other, I think of returning, to hear visionary music and commune with sprites, for I shall never find in the whole universe besides so whimsical a theatre.

The heat was so powerful that all the inhabitants of Pisa showed their wisdom by keeping within doors. Not an animal appeared in the streets, except five camels laden with water, stalking along a range of garden walls and pompous mansions, with an awning before every door. We were obliged to follow their steps, at least a quarter of a mile, before we reached our inn. Ice was the first thing I sought after, and when I had swallowed an unreasonable portion; I began not to think quite so much of the deserts of Africa, as the heat and the camels had induced me to do a moment ago.

Early in the afternoon, we proceeded to Leghorn through a wild tract of forest, somewhat in the style of our English parks. The trees in some places formed such shady arbours, that we could not resist the desire of walking beneath them, and were well rewarded; for after struggling through a rough thicket, we entered a lawn hemmed in by oaks and chestnuts, which extends several leagues along the coast and conceals the prospect of the ocean; but we heard its murmurs.

Nothing could be smoother or more verdant than the herbage, which was sprinkled with daisies and purple cro-

cuses as in the month of May. I felt all the genial sensations of Spring steal into my bosom, and was greatly delighted upon discovering vast bushes of mirtle in the fullest and most luxuriant bloom. The softness of the air, the sound of the distant surges, the evening gleams, and repose of the landscape, quieted the tumult of my spirits, and I experienced the calm of my infant hours. I lay down in the open turf-walk between the shrubberies, and during a few moments had forgotten every care; but when I began to enquire into my happiness, I found it vanish. I felt myself without those I love most, in situations they would have warmly admired, and without them these pleasant lawns and woodlands looked pleasant in vain.

We had not left this woody region far behind, when the Fanale began to lift itself above the horizon—the very tower you have so often mentioned; the sky and ocean glowing with amber light, and the ships out at sea appearing in a golden haze, of which we have no conception in our northern climates. Such a prospect, together with the fresh gales from the Mediterranean, charmed me; I hurried immediately to the port and sat on a reef of rocks, listening to the waves that broke amongst them.

LETTER XIV.

The Mole at Leghorn. — Coast scattered over with Watch-towers. —
Branches of rare coral unexpectedly acquired.

October 3rd, 1780.

I went, as you would have done, to walk on the mole as soon the sun began to shine upon it. Its construction you are no stranger to; therefore I think I may spare myself the trouble of saying anything about it, except that the port which it embraces is no longer crowded. Instead of ten ranks of vessels there are only three, and those consist chiefly of Corsican galleys, that look as poor

and tattered as their masters. Not much attention did I bestow upon such objects, but, taking my seat at the extremity of the quay, surveyed the smooth plains of ocean, the coast scattered over with watch towers, and the rocky isle of Gorgona, emerging from the morning mists, which still lingered upon the horizon.

Whilst I was musing upon the scene, and calling up all that train of ideas before my imagination, which pleased your own upon beholding it, an ancient figure, with a beard that would have suited a sea-god, stepped out of a boat, and tottering up the steps of the quay, presented himself before me with a basket in his hand. He stayed dripping a few moments before he pronounced a syllable, and when he began his discourse, I was in doubt whether I should not have moved off in a hurry, there was something so wan and singular in his countenance. Except this being, no other was visible for a quarter of a mile at least. I knew not what strange adventure I might be upon the point of commencing, or what message I was to expect from the submarine divinities. However, after all my conjectures, the figure turned out to be no other than an old fisherman, who having picked up a few branches of the rarest species of coral, offered them to sale. I eagerly made the purchase, and thought myself a favourite of Neptune, since he allowed me to acquire, with such facility, some of his most beautiful ornaments.

My bargain thus expeditiously concluded, I ran along the quay with my basket of coral, and, taking boat, was rowed back to the gate of the port. The carriage waited there; I shut myself up in the grateful shade of green blinds, and was driven away at a rate that favoured my impatience. We bowled smoothly over the lawns described in my last letter, amongst myrtles in flower that would have done honour to the island of Juan Fernandez.

Arrived at Pisa, I scarcely allowed myself a moment to revisit the Campo Santo, but hurried on to Lucca, and threw the whole idle town into a stare by my speedy return.

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LETTER XV.

Florence again. — Palazzo Vecchio. — View on the Arno. — Sculptures by Cellini and John of Bologna. — Contempt shown by the Austrians to the memory of the House of Medici. — Evening visit to the Garden of Boboli. — The Opera. — Miserable Singing. — A Neapolitan Duchess.

Florence, October 5th, 1789.

It was not without regret that I forced myself from Lucca. We had all the same road to go over again, that brought us to this important republic, but we broke down by way of variety. The wind was chill, the atmosphere damp and clogged with unwholesome vapours, through which we were forced to walk for a league, whilst our chaise lagged after us.

Taking shelter in a miserable cottage, we remained shivering and shaking till the carriage was in some sort of order, and then proceeded so slowly that we did not arrive at Florence till late in the evening, and took possession of an apartment over the Arno, which being swollen with rains roared like a mountain torrent. Throwing open my windows, I viewed its agitated course by the light of the moon, half concealed in stormy clouds, which hung above the fortress of the Belvedere. I sat contemplating the effect of the shadows on the bridge, on the heights of Boboli, and the mountain covered with pale olive groves, amongst which a convent is situated, till the moon sank into the darkest quarter of the sky, and a bell began to toll. Its mournful sound filled me with gloomy recollections. I closed the casements, and read till midnight some dismal memoir of conspiracies and assassinations, Guelphs and Ghibelines, the black story of ancient Florence.

October 6th.

Every cloud was dispersed when I arose, and the purity and transparency of the æther added new charms to

the picturesque eminences around. I felt quite revived by this exhilarating prospect, and walked in the splendour of sunshine to the porticoes beneath the famous gallery, then to an ancient castle, raised in the days of the Republic, which fronts the grand piazza. Colossal statues and trophies, badly carved in the true spirit of the antique, are placed before it. On one side a fountain, clung round with antick figures of bronze, by John of Bologna. On the other, three lofty pointed arches, and under one of them the Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini.

Having examined some groups of sculptures by Baccio Bandinelli and other mighty artists, I entered the court of the castle, dark and deep, as if hewn out of a rock, surrounded by a vaulted arcade covered with arabesque ornaments, and supported by pillars almost as uncouthly designed as those of Persepolis. In the midst appears a marble fount with an image of bronze, that looks quite strange and cabalistic. I leaned against it to look up to the summits of the walls, which rise to a vast height, from whence springs a slender tower. Above, in the apartments of the castle, are still preserved numbers of curious cabinets, tables of inlaid gems, and a thousand rarities, collected by the house of Medici, and not yet entirely frittered away and disposed of by public sale.

It was not without indignation that I learnt this new mark of contempt which the Austrians bestow on the memory of those illustrious patrons of the Arts; whom, being unwilling to imitate, they affect to despise as a race of merchants whose example it would be abasing their dignity to follow.

I could have stayed much longer to enjoy the novelty and strangeness of the place; but it was right to pay some compliments of form. That duty over, I dined in peace and solitude, and repaired, as evening drew on, to the thickets of Boboli.

What a serene sky! what mellowness in the tints of the mountains! A purple haze concealed the bases, whilst their summits were invested with saffron light, discovering every white cot and every copse that clothed

their declivities. The prospect widened as I ascended the terraces of the garden.

After traversing many long dusky alleys, I reached the opening on the brow of the hill, and seating myself under the statue of Ceres, took a sketch of the huge mountainous cupola of the Duomo, the adjoining lovely tower and one more massive in its neighbourhood, built not improbably in the style of ancient Etruria. Beyond this historic group of buildings, a plain stretches itself far and wide, most richly studded with villas and gardens, and groves of pine and olive, quite to the feet of the mountains.

Having marked the sun's going down and all the soothing effects cast by his declining rays on every object, I went through a plat of vines to a favourite haunt of mine : — a little garden of the most fragrant roses, with a spring under a rustic arch of grotto-work fringed with ivy. Thousands of fish inhabit here, of that beautiful glittering species which comes from China. This golden nation were leaping after insects as I stood gazing upon the deep clear water, listening to the drops that trickle from the cove. Opposite to which, at the end of a green alley, you discover an oval basin, and in the midst of it an antique statue, full of that graceful languor so peculiarly Grecian.

Whilst I was musing on the margin of the spring (for I returned to it after casting a look upon the sculpture), the moon rose above the tufted foliage of the terraces, which I descended by several flights of steps, with marble balustrades crowned by vases of aloes.

It was now seven o'clock and all the world were going to my Lord T—'s, who lives in a fine house all over blue and silver, with stuffed birds, alabaster cupids, and a thousand prettinesses more; but to say truth, neither he nor his abode are worth mentioning. I found a deal of slopping and sipping of tea going forward, and many dawdlers assembled.

As I can say little good of the party, I had better shut the door, and conduct you to the Opera, which is really

a striking spectacle. The first soprano put my patience to severe proof, during the few minutes I attended. You never beheld such a porpoise. If these animals were to sing, I should conjecture it would be in his style. You may suppose how often I invoked Pacchierotti, and regretted the lofty melody of Quinto Fabio. Everybody seemed as well contented as if there were no such thing as good singing in the world, except a Neapolitan duchess who delighted me by her vivacity. We took our fill of maledictions, and went home equally pleased with each other for having mutually execrated both singers and audience.

LETTER XVI.

Detained at Florence by reports of the Malaria at Rome. — Ascend one of the hills celebrated by Dante. — View from its brow. — Chapel designed by Michael Angelo. — Birth of a Princess. — The christening. — Another evening visit to the woods of Boboli.

October 22nd, 1780.

They say the air is worse this year at Rome than ever, and that it would be madness to go thither during its malignant influence. This was very bad news indeed to one heartily tired of Florence, at least of its society. Merciful powers! what a set harbour within its walls! * * * You may imagine I do not take vehement delight in this company, though very ingenious, praiseworthy, etc. The woods of the Cascini shelter me every morning; and there grows an old crooked ilex at their entrance, twisting round a pine, upon whose branches I sit for hours.

In the afternoon I am irresistibly attracted to the thickets of Boboli. The other evening, however, I varied my walks, and ascended one of those pleasant hills celebrated by Dante, which rise in the vicinity of the city, and command a variegated scene of towers, villas, cottages, and gardens. On the right, as you stand upon the brow, appears Fiesole with its turrets and white houses, covering a rocky mount to the left, the Val d'Arno lost in the haze of the horizon. A Franciscan convent stands

on the summit of the eminence, wrapped up in ancient cypresses, which hinder its holy inhabitants from seeing too much of so gay a view. The paved ascent leading up to their abode receives also a shade from the cypresses which border it. Beneath this venerable avenue, crosses with inscriptions are placed at certain distances, to mark the various moments of Christ's passion; as when fainting under his burden he halted to repose himself, or when he met his afflicted mother.

Above, at the end of the perspective, rises a chapel designed by M. A. Buonarrotti; further on, an ancient church, encrusted with white marble, porphyry- and verd antique. The interior presents a crowded assemblage of ornaments, elaborate mosaic pavements and inlaid work without end. The high altar is placed in a semi-circular recess, which, like the apsis of the church at Torcello, glitters with barbaric paintings on a gold ground, and receives a servid glow of light from five windows, filled up with transparent marble clouded like tortoiseshell. A smooth polished staircase leads to this mysterious place: another brought me to a subterraneous chapel, supported by confused groups of variegated pillars, just visible by the glimmer of lamps.

Passing on not unawed, I followed some flights of steps, which terminate in the neat cloisters of the convent, in perfect preservation, but totally deserted. Ranges of citron and aloes fill up the quadrangle, whose walls are hung with superstitious pictures most singularly fancied. The Jesuits were the last tenants of this retirement, and seem to have e had great reason for their choice. Its peace and still ness delighted me .

Next day I was engaged by a very opposite scene, though much against my will. Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess having produced a princess in the night, everybody put on grand gala in the morning, and I was carried, along with the glittering tide of courtiers, ministers, and ladies, to see the christening. After the Grand Duke had talked politics for some time, the doors of a temporary chapel were thrown open. Trumpets flourished, proces-



sions marched, and the archbishop began the ceremony at an altar of massive gold, placed under a yellow silk pavilion, with pyramids of lights before it. Wax tapers, though it was noon-day, shone in every corner of the apartments. Two rows of pages, gorgeously accoutred, and holding enormous torches, stood on each side his Royal Highness, and made him the prettiest courtesies imaginable, to the sound of an indifferent band of music, though led by Nardini. The poor old archbishop looked very piteous and saint-like, led the *Te Deum* a quavering voice, and the rest followed him with thoughtless expedition.

The ceremony being despatched (for his Royal Highness was in a mighty fidget to shrink back into his beloved obscurity), the crowd dispersed, and I went, with a few others, to dine at my Lord T——'s.

Evening drawing on, I ran to throw myself once more into the woods of Boboli, and remained till it was night in their recesses. Really this garden is enough to bewilder an enthusiastic spirit; there is something so solemn in its avenues, and spires of cypresses. When I had mused for many an interesting hour amongst them, I emerged into the orangery before the palace, which overlooks the largest district of the town, and beheld, as I slowly descended the road which leads up to it, certain bright lights glancing about the cupola of the *Duomo* and the points of the highest towers. At first I thought them meteors, or those illusive fires which often dance before the eye of my imagination; but soon I was convinced of their reality; for in a few minutes the lantern of the cathedral was lighted up by agents really invisible, whilst a stream of torches ran along the battlements of the old castle which I mentioned in a former letter.

I enjoyed this prospect at a distance: when near, my pleasure was greatly diminished, for half the fish in the town were frying to rejoice the hearts of his Royal Highness's loyal subjects, and bonfires blazing in every street and alley. Hubbubs and stinks of every denomination drove me quickly to the theatre; but that was all glitter

and glare. No taste, no arrangement, paltry looking-glasses, and rat's-tail candles.

LETTER XVII.

Pilgrimage to Valombrosa. — Rocky Steeps. — Groves of Pine. — Vast Amphitheatre of Lawns and Meadows. — Reception at the Convent. — Wild Glens where the Hermit Gualbertus had his Cell. — Conversation with the holy Fathers. — Legendary Tales. — The consecrated Cleft. — The Romitorio. — Extensive View of the Val d'Arno. — Return to Florence.

October 23rd, 1789.

Do you recollect our evening rambles last year, in the valley at F——, under the hill of pines? I remember we often fancied the scene like Valombrosa; and vowed, if ever an occasion offered, to visit its deep retirements. I had put off the execution of this pilgrimage from day to day till the warm weather was gone; and the Florentines declared I should be frozen if I attempted it. Everybody stared last night at the Opera when I told them I was going to bury myself in fallen leaves, and hear no music but their rustlings.

Mr.—— was just as eager as myself to escape the chit-chat and nothingness of Florence; so we finally determined upon our expedition, and mounting our horses, set out this morning, happily without any company but the spirit which led us along. We had need of inspiration, since nothing else, I think, would have tempted us over such dreary, uninteresting hillocks as rise from the banks of the Arno. The hoary olive is their principal vegetation; so that Nature, in this part of the country, seems in a withering decrepit state, and may not unaptly be compared to "an old woman clothed in grey." However, we did not suffer the prospect to damp our enthusiasm, which was the better preserved for Valombrosa.

About half way, our palfreys thought proper to look out for some oats, and I to creep into a sort of granary in the midst of a barren waste, scattered over with white

rocks, that reflected more heat than I cared for, although I had been told snow and ice were to be my portion. Seating myself on the floor between heaps of corn, I reached down a few purple clusters of Muscadine grapes, which hung to dry in the ceiling, and amused myself very pleasantly with them till the horses had finished their meal and it was lawful to set forwards. We met with nothing but rocky steeps shattered into fragments, and such roads as half inclined us to repent our undertaking; but cold was not yet amongst the number of our evils.

At last, after ascending a tedious while, we began to feel the wind blow sharply from the peaks of the mountains, and to hear the murmur of groves of pine. A paved path leads across them, quite darkened by boughs, which meeting over our heads cast a gloom and a chillness below that would have stopped the proceedings of reasonable mortals, and sent them to bask in the plain; but, being not so easily discomfited, we threw ourselves boldly into the forest. It presented that boundless confusion of tall straight stems I am so fond of, and exhaled a fresh aromatic odour that revived my spirits.

The cold to be sure was piercing; but setting that at defiance, we galloped on, and entered a vast amphitheatre of lawns and meadows surrounded by thick woods beautifully green. The steep cliffs and mountains which guard this retired valley are clothed with beech to their very summits; and on their slopes, whose smoothness and verdure equal our English pastures, were dispersed large flocks of sheep. The herbage, moistened by streams which fall from the eminences, has never been known to fade; thus, whilst the chief part of Tuscany is parched by the heats of summer, these upland meadows retain the freshness of spring. I regretted not having visited them sooner, as autumn had already made great havock amongst the foliage. Showers of leaves blew full in our faces as we rode towards the convent, placed at an extremity of the vale and sheltered by firs and chestnuts towering one above another.

Whilst we were alighting before the entrance, two fathers came out and received us into the peace of their retirement. We found a blazing fire, and tables spread very comfortably before it, round which five or six overgrown friars were lounging, who seemed by the sleekness and rosy hue of their countenances not totally to have despised this mortal existence.

My letters of recommendation soon brought the heads of the order about me, fair round figures, such as a Chinese would have placed in his pagoda. I could willingly have dispensed with their attention; yet to avoid this was scarcely within the circle of possibility. All dinner, therefore, we endured an infinity of nonsensical questions; but as soon as that was over, I lost no time in repairing to the lawns and forests. The fathers made a shift to waddle after, as fast and as complaisantly as they were able, but were soon distanced.

Now I found myself at liberty, and pursued a narrow path overhung by rock, with bushy chestnuts starting from the crevices. This led me into wild glens of beech trees, mostly decayed and covered with moss: several were fallen. It was amongst these the holy hermit Gualbertus had his cell. I rested a moment upon one of their huge branches, listening to the roar of a waterfall which the wood concealed. The dry leaves chased each other down the steeps on the edge of the torrents with hollow rustlings, whilst the solemn wave of the forests above most perfectly answered the idea I had formed of Valombrosa,

— where the Etrurian shades
High overarch'd embower.

The scene was beginning to take effect, and the genius of Milton to move across his favourite valley, when the fathers arrived puffing and blowing, by an easier ascent than I knew of.

« You have missed the way, » cried the youngest;
« the hermitage, with the fine picture by Andrea del

Sarto, which all the English admire, is on the opposite side of the wood : there ! don't you see it on the point of the cliff ? »

« Yes, yes, » said I a little peevishly ; « I wonder the devil has not pushed it down long ago ; it seems to invite his kick. »

« Satan, » answered the old Pagod very dryly, « is full of malice ; but whoever drinks of a spring which the Lord causeth to flow near the hermitage is freed from his illusions. »

« Are they so ? » replied I with a sanctified accent, « then I pray thee conduct me thither, for I have great need of such salutary waters. »

The youngest father shook his head, as much as to say, « This is nothing more than a heretic's whim. »

The senior set forwards with greater piety, and began some legendary tales of the kind which my soul loveth. He pointed to a chasm in the cliff, round which we were winding by a spiral path, where Gualbertus used to sleep, and, turning himself towards the west, see a long succession of saints and martyrs sweeping athwart the sky, and gilding the clouds with far brighter splendours than the setting sun. Here he rested till his last hour, when the bells of the convent beneath (which till that moment would have made dogs howl had there any within its precincts) struch out such harmonious jingling that all the country around was ravished, and began lifting up their eyes with singular devotion, when, behold ! light dawned, cherubim appeared, and birds chirped although it was midnight. « Alas ! alas ! what would I not give to witness such a spectacle, and read my prayer-book by the effulgence of opening heaven ! »

However, willing to see something at least, I crept into the consecrated cleft and extended myself on its rugged surface. A very penitential couch ! but commanding glorious prospects of the world below, which lay this evening in deep blue shade ; the sun looking red and angry through misty vapours, which prevented our discovering the Tuscan sea.

Finding the rock as damp as might be expected, I soon shifted my quarters, and followed the youngest father up to the Romitorio, a snug little hermitage, with a neat chapel, and altar-piece by Andrea del Sarto, which I should have examined more minutely had not the wild and mountainous forest scenery possessed my whole attention. I just stayed to taste the holy fountain: and then, escaping from my conductors, ran eagerly down the path, leaping over the springs that crossed it, and entered a lawn of the smoothest turf grazed by sheep. Beyond this opening rises a second, hemmed in with thickets; and still higher, a third, whence a forest of young pines spires up into a lofty theatre terminated by peaks, half concealed by a thick mantle of beech tinged with ruddy brown. Pausing in the midst of the lawns, and looking upward to the sweeps of wood which surrounded me, I addressed my orisons to the genius of the place, and prayed that I might once more return into its bosom, and be permitted to bring you along with me, for surely such meads, such groves, were formed for our enjoyment!

This little rite performed, I walked on quite to the extremity of the pastures, traversed a thicket, and found myself on the edge of precipices, beneath whose base the whole Val d'Arno lies expanded. I listened to distant murmurings in the plain, saw wreaths of smoke rising from the cottages, and viewed a vast tract of grey barren country, which evening rendered still more desolate, bounded by the black mountain of Radicofani. Then, turning round, I beheld the whole extent of rock and forest, the groves of beech, and wilds above the convent, glowing with fiery red, for the sun, making a last effort to pierce the vapours, produced this effect; which was the more striking as the sky was gloomy, and the rest of the prospect of a melancholy blue.

Returning slowly homeward, I marked the warm glow deserting the eminences, and heard the sullen toll of a bell. The young boys of the seminary were moving in a body to their dark enclosure, all dressed in black. Many of them looked pale and wan. I wished to ask them whe-

ther the solitude of Valombrosa suited their age and vivacity ; but a tall spectre of a priest drove them along like a herd , and presently , the gates opening , I saw them no more.

The night was growing chill , the winds boisterous , and in the intervals of the gusts I had the addition of a lamentable screech owl to depress my spirits. Upon the whole, I was not at all concerned to meet the fathers , who came out to show me to my room, and entertain me with various gossipings , both sacred and profane , till supper appeared.

Next morning , the Padre Decano gave us chocolate in his apartment : and afterwards led us round the convent, insisting most unmercifully upon our viewing every cell and every dormitory. However , I was determined to make a full stop at the organ , one of the most harmonious I ever played upon ; but placed in a deep recess , feebly lighted by lamps, not calculated to inspire triumphant voluntaries. The monks , who had all crowded into the loft, in expectation of brisk jigs and lively overtures, soon retired upon hearing a strain ten times more sorrowful than that to which they were accustomed. I did not lament their departure, but played on till our horses came to the gate. We mounted , wound back through the grove of pines which protect Valombrosa from intrusion , descended the steep, and , gaining the plains , galloped in a few hours to Florence.

LETTER XVIII.

Cathedral at Sienna.— A vaulted Chamber.— Leave Sienna.— Mountains round Radicofani.— Hunting Palace of the Grand Dukes.— A grim fraternity of Cats.— Dreary Apartment.

Here my duty of course was to see the cathedral , and I got up much earlier than I wished , in order to perform it. I wonder that our holy ancestors did not choose a mountain at once , scrape it into tabernacles , and chisel it into scripture stories. It would have cost them almost as little

trouble as the building in question, which, by many of the Italian devotees to a purer style of architecture, is esteemed a masterpiece of ridiculous taste and elaborate absurdity. The front, encrusted with alabaster, is worked into a million of fretted arches and puzzling ornaments. There are statues without number, and relieves without end or meaning.

The church within is all of black and white marble alternately; the roof blue and gold, with a profusion of silken banners hanging from it; and a cornice running above the principal arcade, composed entirely of busts representing the whole series of sovereign pontiffs, from the first Bishop of Rome to Adrian the Fourth. Pope Joan they say figured amongst them, between Leo the Fourth and Benedict the Third, till the year 1600, when some authors have asserted she was turned out, at the instance of Clement the Eighth, to make room for Zacharias the First.

I hardly knew which was the nave, or which the cross aisle, of this singular edifice, so perfect is the confusion of its parts. The pavement demands attention, being inlaid so curiously as to represent variety of histories taken from Holy Writ, and designed somewhat in the style of that hobgoblin tapestry which used to bestare the walls of our ancestors. Near the high altar stands the strangest of pulpits, supported by polished pillars of granite, rising from lions' backs, which serve as pedestals. In every corner of the place some glittering chapel or other offends or astonishes you. That, however, of the Chigi family, it must be allowed, has infinite merit with respect to design and execution: but it wants effect, as seeming out of place in this chaos of caprice and finery.

From the church I entered a vaulted chamber, erected by the Piccoliminis, filled with missals most exquisitely illuminated. The paintings in fresco on the walls are rather barbarous, though executed after the designs of the mighty Raphael; but then we must remember, he had but just escaped from Pietro Perugino.

Not staying long in the Duomo, we left Sienna in good time; and, after being shaken and tumbled in the worst

roads that ever pretended to be made use of, found ourselves beneath the rough mountains round Radicofani, about seven o'clock on a cold and dismal evening. Up we toiled a steep craggy ascent, and reached at length the inn upon its summit. My heart sank when I entered a vast range of apartments, with high black raftered roofs, once intended for a hunting palace of the Grand Dukes, but now desolate and forlorn. The wind having risen, every door began to shake, and every board substituted for a window to clatter, as if the severe power who dwells on the topmost peak of Radicofani, according to its village mythologists, was about to visit his abode.

My only spell to keep him at a distance was kindling an enormous fire, whose charitable gleams cheered my spirits, and gave them a quicker flow. Yet, for some minutes, I never ceased looking, now to the right, now to the left, up at the dark beams, and down the long passages, where the pavement, broken up in several places, and earth newly strewn about, seemed to indicate that something horrid was concealed below.

A grim fraternity of cats kept whisking backwards and forwards in these dreary avenues, which I am apt to imagine is the very identical scene of a sabbath of witches at certain periods. Not venturing to explore them, I fastened my door, pitched my bed opposite the hearth which glowed with embers, and crept under the coverlids, hardly venturing to go to sleep lest I should be suddenly roused from it by I know not what terrible initiation into the mysteries of the place.

Scarcely was I settled, before two or three of the brotherhood just mentioned stalked in at a little opening under the door. I insisted upon their moving off faster than they had entered, and was surprised, when midnight came, to hear nothing more than their doleful mewings echoed by the hollow walls and arches.

LETTER XIX.

Leave the gloomy precincts of Radicofani and enter the Papal territory. — Country near Aquapendente. — Shores of the Lake of Bolsena. — Forest of Oasi — Ascend Monte Fiascone. — Inhabited Caverns. — Viterbo. — Anticipations of Rome.

Radicofani, October 28th, 1780.

I begin to despair of magical adventures, since none happened at Radicofani, which Nature seems wholly to have abandoned. Not a tree, not an acre of soil, has she bestowed upon its inhabitants, who would have more excuse for practising the gloomy art than the rest mankind. I was very glad to leave their black hills and stony wilderness behind, and, entering the Papal territory, to see some shrubs and corn-fields at a distance.

Near Aquapendente, which is situated on a ledge of cliffs mantled with chestnut copses and tufted ilex, the country grew varied and picturesque. St. Lorenzo, the next post, built upon a hill, overlooks the lake of Bolsena, whose woody shores conceal many ruined buildings. We passed some of them in a retired vale, with arches from rock to rock, and grottos beneath half lost in thickets, from which rise craggy pinnacles crowned by mouldering towers; just such scenery as Polemberg and Bamboche introduce in their paintings.

Beyond these truly Italian prospects, which a mellow evening tint rendered still more interesting, a forest of oaks presents itself upon the brows of hills, which extend almost the whole way to Monte Fiascone. It was late before we ascended it. The whole country seems full of inhabited caverns, that began as night drew on to shine with fires. We saw many dark shapce glancing before them, and perhaps a subterraneous people like the Cimmerians lurk in their recesses. As we drew near Viterbo, the lights in the fields grew less and less frequent; and when we entered the town, all was total darkness.

To-morrow I hope to pay my vows before the high al-

tar of St. Peter, and tread the Vatican. Why are you not here to usher me into the imperial city : to watch my first glance of the Coliseo : and lead me up the stairs of the Capitol ? I shall rise before the sun, that I may see him set from Monte Cavallo.

LETTER XX.

Set out in the dark. — The Lago di Vico. — View of the spacious plains where the Romans reared their seat of empire. — Ancient splendour. — Present silence and desolation. — Shepherd huts. — Wretched policy of the Papal Government. — Distant view of Rome. — Sensations on entering the City. — The Pope returning from Vespers. — St. Peter's Colonnade. — Interior of the Church. — Reveries. — A visionary scheme. — The Pantheon.

Rome, October 29th, 1780.

We set out in the dark. Morning dawned over the Lago di Vico ; its waters of a deep ultramarine blue, and its surrounding forest catching the rays of the rising sun. It was in vain I looked for the cupola of St. Peter's upon descending the mountains beyond Viterbo. Nothing but a sea of vapours was visible.

At length they rolled away, and the spacious plains began to show themselves, in which the most warlike of nations reared their seat of empire. On the left, afar off, rises the rugged chain of Apennines, and on the other side, a shining expanse of ocean terminates the view. It was upon this vast surface so many illustrious actions were performed, and I know not where a mighty people could have chosen a grander theatre. Here was space for the march of armies, and verge enough for encampments : levels for martial games, and room for that variety of roads and causeways that led from the capital to Ostia. How many triumphant legions have trodden these pavements ! how many captive kings ! What throngs of cars and chariots once glittered on their surface ! savage animals dragged from the interior of Africa ; and the ambassadors of Indian princes, followed by their exotic train, hastening to implore the favour of the senate.

During many ages, this eminence commanded almost every day such illustrious scenes; but all are vanished; the splendid tumult is passed away: silence and desolation remain. Dreary flats thinly scattered over with ilex, and barren hillocks crowned by solitary towers, were the only objects we perceived for several miles. Now and then we passed a few black ill-favoured sheep straggling by the way's side, near a ruined sepulchre, just such animals as an ancient would have sacrificed to the Manes. Sometimes we crossed a brook, whose ripplings were the only sounds which broke the general stillness, and observed the shepherds' huts on its banks, propped up with broken pedestals and marble friezes. I entered one of them, whose owner has abroad tending his herds, and began writing upon the sand and murmuring a melancholy song. Perhaps the dead listened to me from their narrow cells. The living I can answer for; they were far enough removed.

You will not be surprised at the dark tone of my musings in so sad a scene, especially as the weather lowered; and you are well acquainted how greatly I depend upon skies and sunshine. To-day I had no blue firmament to revive my spirits; no genial gales, no aromatic plants to irritate my nerves and lend at least a momentary animation. Heath and a greyish kind of moss are the sole vegetation which covers this endless wilderness. Every slope is strewn with the relics of a happier period; trunks of trees, shattered columns, cedar beams, helmets of bronze, skulls and coins, are frequently dug up together.

I cannot boast of having made any discoveries, nor of sending you any novel intelligence. You knew before how perfectly the environs of Rome were desolate, and how completely the Papal government contrives to make its subjects miserable. But who knows that they were not just as wretched in those boasted times we are so fond of celebrating? All is doubt and conjecture in this frail existence; and I might as well attempt proving to whom belonged the mouldering bones which lay dis-

persed around me, as venture to affirm that one age is more fortunate than another. Very likely the poor cottager, under whose roof I reposed, is happier than the luxurious Roman upon the remains of whose palace, perhaps, his shed is raised; and yet that Roman flourished in the purple days of the empire, when all was wealth and splendour, triumph and exultation.

I could have spent the whole day by the rivulet, lost in dreams and meditations; but recollecting my vow, I ran back to the carriage and drove on. The road not having been mended, I believe, since the days of the Cæsars, would not allow our motions to be very precipitate. « When you gain the summit of yonder hill, you will discover Rome, » said one of the postillions: up we dragged; no city appeared. « From the next, » cried out a second; and so on from height to height did they amuse my expectations. I thought Rome fled before us, such was my impatience, till at last we perceived a cluster of hills with green pastures on their summits, inclosed by thickets and shaded by flourishing ilex. Here and there a white house, built in the antique style, with open porticos, that received a faint gleam of the evening sun, just emerged from the clouds and tinting the meads below. Now domes and towers began to discover themselves in the valley, and St. Peter's to rise above the magnificent roofs of the Vatican. Every step we advanced the scene extended, till, winding suddenly round the hill, all Rome opened to our view.

Shall I ever forget the sensations I experienced upon slowly descending the hills, and crossing the bridge over the Tiber; when I entered an avenue, between terraces and ornamented gates of villas, which leads to the Porto del Popolo, and beheld the square, the domes, the obelisk, the long perspective of streets and palaces opening beyond, all glowing with the vivid red of sunset? You can imagine how I enjoyed my beloved tint, my favourite hour, surrounded by such objects. You can fancy me ascending Monte Cavallo, leaning against the pedestal which supports Bucephalus; then,

spite of time and distance, hurrying to St. Peter's in performance of my vow.

I met the Holy Father in all his pomp returning from vespers. Trumpets flourishing, and a troop of guards drawn out upon Ponte St. Angelo. Casting a respectful glance upon the Moles Adriani, I moved on till the full sweep of St. Peter's colonnade opened upon me. The edifice appears to have been raised within the year, such is its freshness and preservation. I could hardly take my eyes from off the beautiful symmetry of its front, contrasted with the magnificent, though irregular courts of the Vatican towering over the colonnade, till, the sun sinking behind the dome, I ran up the steps and entered the grand portal, which was on the very point of being closed.

I knew not where I was, or to what scene transported. A sacred twilight concealing the extremities of the structure, I could not distinguish any particular ornament, but enjoyed the effect of the whole. No damp air or foetid exhalation offended me. The perfume of incense was not yet entirely dissipated. No human being stirred. I heard a door close with the sound of thunder, and thought I distinguished some faint whisperings, but am ignorant whence they came. Several hundred lamps twinkled round the high altar, quite lost in the immensity of the pile. No other light disturbed my reveries but the dying glow still visible through the western windows. Imagine how I felt upon finding myself alone in this vast temple at so late an hour. Do you think I quitted it without some revelation?

It was almost eight o'clock before I issued forth, and, pausing a few minutes under the porticos, listened to the rush of the fountains; then traversing half the town, I believe, in my way to the Villa Medici, under which I am lodged, fell into a profound repose, which my zeal and exercise may be allowed, I think, to have merited.

October 30th.

Immediately after breakfast I repaired again to St Peter's, which even exceeded the height of my expectations. I could hardly quit it. I wish his Holiness would allow me to erect a little tabernacle within this glorious temple. I should desire no other prospect during the winter: no other sky than the vast arches glowing with golden ornaments, so lofty as to lose all glitter or gaudiness. But I cannot say I should be perfectly contented, unless I could obtain another tabernacle for you. Thus established, we would take our evening walks on the field of marble; for is not the pavement vast enough for the extravagance of the appellation? Sometimes, instead of climbing a mountain, we should ascend the cupola, and look down on our little encampment below. At night I should wish for a constellation of lamps dispersed about in clusters, and so contrived as to diffuse a mild and equal light. Music should not be wanting: at one time to breathe in the subterraneous chapels, at another to echo through the dome.

The doors should be closed, and not a mortal admitted. No priests, no cardinals: God forbid! We would have all the space to ourselves, and to beigns of our own visionary persuasion.

I was so absorbed in my imaginary palace, and exhausted with contriving plans for its embellishment, as scarcely to have spirits left for the Pantheon, which I visited late in the evening, and entered with a reverence approaching to superstition. The whiteness of the dome offended me, for, alas! this venerable temple has been whitewashed. I slunk into one of the recesses, closed my eyes, transported myself into antiquity; then opened them again, tried to persuade myself the Pagan gods were in their niches, and the saints out of the question; was vexed at coming to my senses, and finding them all there, St. Andrew with his cross, and St. Agnes with her lamb, etc. Then I paced disconsolately into the porti-

co, which shows the name of Agrippa on its pediment. Fixed for a few minutes against a Corinthian column, I lamented that no pontiff arrived with victims and aruspices, of whom I might enquire, what, in the name of birds and garbage, put me so terribly out of humour! for you most know I was very near being disappointed, and began to think Piranesi and Paolo Panini had been a great deal too colossal in their representations of this venerable structure. I left the column, walked to the centre of the temple, and there remained motionless as a statue. Some architects have celebrated the effect of light from the opening above, and pretended it to be distributed in such a manner as to give those, who walk beneath, the appearance of mystic beings streaming with radiance. If that were the case! I appeared, to be sure, a luminous figure, and never stood I more in need of something to enliven me.

My spirits were not mended upon returning home. I had expected a heap of Venetian letters, but could not discover one. I had received no intelligence from England for many a tedious day; and for aught I can tell to the contrary, you may have been dead these three weeks. I think I shall wander soon in the catacombs, which I try lustily to persuade myself communicate with the lower world; and perhaps I may find some letter there from you lying upon a broken sarcophagus, dated from the realms of Night, and giving an account of your descent into her bosom. Yet, I pray continually, notwithstanding my curiosity to learn what passes in the dark regions beyond the tomb, that you will remain a few years longer on our planet; for what would become of me should I lose sight of you for ever? Stay, therefore, as long as you can, and let us have the delight of dozing a little more of this poor existence away together, and steeping ourselves in pleasant dreams.

LETTER XXI.

Leave Rome for Naples. — Scenery in the vicinity of Rome. — Albano. — Malaria. — Veietri. — Classical associations. — The Circean Promontory. — Terracina. — Ruined Palace. — Mountain Groves. — Rock of Circe. — The Appian Way. — Arrive at Mola di Gaeta — Beautiful prospect. — A Deluge. — Enter Naples by night, during a fearful Storm. — Clear morning. — View from my window. — 'Courtly Mob at the Palace. — The Presence Chamber — The King and his Courtiers. — Party at the House of Sir W. H. — Grand Illumination at the Theatre of St. Carlo. — Marchesi.

November 1st, 1780.

Though you find I am not yet snatched away from the earth, according to my last night's bodings; I was far too restless and dispirited to deliver my recommendatory letters. — St. Carlos, a mighty day of gala at Naples, was an excellent excuse for leaving Rome, and indulging my roving disposition. After spending my morning at St. Peter's, we set off about four o'clock, and drove by the Coliseo ad a Capuchin convent, whose monks were all busied in preparing the skeletons of their order, to figure by torch-light in the evening. St. John's of Lateran astonished me. I could not help walking several times round the obelisk, and admiring the noble space in which the palace is erected, and the extensive scene of towers and aqueducts discovered from the platform in front.

We went out at the Porta Appia, and began to perceive the plains which surround the city opening on every side. Long reaches of walls and arches, seldom interrupted, stretch across them. Sometimes, indeed, a withered pine, lifting itself up to the mercy of every blast that sweeps the champagne, breaks their uniformity. Between the aqueducts to the left, nothing but wastes of fern, or tracts of ploughed lands, dark and desolate, are visible, the corn not being yet sprung up. On the right, several groups of ruined fane and sepulchres diversify the levels, with here and there a garden or woody enclosure. Such objects are scattered over the landscape,

which towards the horizon bulges into gentle ascents, and, rising by degrees, swells at length into a chain of mountains, which received the pale gleams of the sun setting in watery clouds.

By this uncertain light we discovered the white buildings of Albano, sprinkled about the steep. We had not many moments to contemplate them, for it was night when we passed the Torre di mezza vie, and began breathing a close pestilential vapour. Half suffocated, and recollecting a variety of terrifying tales about the malaria, we advanced, not without fear, to Velletri, and hardly ventured to fall asleep when arrived there.

November 2nd.

I arose at day-break, and, forgetting fevers and mortalities, ran into a level meadow without the town, whilst the horses were putting to the carriage. Why should I calumniate the pearly transparent air? it seemed at least purer than any I had before inhaled. Being perfectly alone, and not discovering any trace of the neighbouring city, I fancied myself existing in the ancient days of Hesperia, and hoped to meet Picus in his woods before the evening. But, instead of those shrill clamours which used to echo through the thickets when Pan joined with mortals in the chase, I heard the rumbling of our carriage, and the cursing of postillions. Mounting a horse, I flew before them, and seemed to catch inspiration from the breezes. Now I turned my eyes to the ridge of precipices, in whose grotts and caverns Saturn and his people passed their life; then to the distant ocean. Afar off rose the cliff, so famous for Circe's incantations, and the whole line of coats, which was once covered with her forests.

Whilst I was advancing with full speed, the sun-beams began to shoot athwart the mountains, the plains to light up by degrees, and their shrubberies of myrtle to glisten with dewdrops. The sea brightened, and the Circean promontory soon glowed with purple. All day we kept winding through this enchanted country. Towards eve-

ning Terracina appeared before us, in a bold romantic site, house above house, and turreted looking over turret, on the steep of a mountain: inclosed with mouldering walls, and crowned by the ruined terraces of a palace; one of those, perhaps, which the luxurious Romans inhabited during the summer, when so free and lofty an exposition (the sea below, with its gales and murmurs) must have been delightful. Groves of orange and citron hang on the declivity, rough with the Indian fig, whose bright red flowers, illuminated by the sun, had a magic splendour. A palm-tree, growing on the highest crag, adds not a little to its singular appearance. Being the largest I had yet seen, and clustered with fruit, I climbed up the rocks to take a sketch of it; and looking down upon the beach and glassy plains of ocean, exclaimed with Martial:

O nemus! O fontes! solidumque madentis arenæ
Littus, et æquoreis splendidus Auxur aquis!

Glancing my eyes athwart the sea, I fixed them on the rock of Circe, which lies right opposite to Terracina, joined to the continent by a very narrow slip of land, and appearing like an island. The roar of the waves lashing the base of the precipices, might still be thought the howl of savage moustersons; but where are those woods which shaded the dome of the goddess? Scarce a tree appears. A few thickets, and but a few, are the sole remains of this once impenetrable vegetation; yet even these I longed to visit, such was my predilection for the spot.

Descending the cliff, and pursuing our route to Mola along the shore, by a grand road formed on the ruins of the Appian Way, we drove under an enormous perpendicular rock, standing detached, like a watch tower, and cut into arsenals and magazines. Day closed just as we got beyond it, and a new moon gleamed faintly on the waters. We saw fires afar off in the bay, some twinkling on the coast, others upon the waves, and heard the murmur of voices; for the night was still and solemn, like that of

Cajetas's funeral. I looked anxiously on a sea, where the heroes of the *Odyssey* and *Æneid* had sailed to fulfil their mystic destinies.

Nine struck when we arrived at Mola di Gaeta. The boats were just coming in (whose lights we had seen out upon the main), and brought such fish as Neptune, I dare say, would have grudged *Æneas* and *Ulysses*.

November 3rd.

The morning was soft, but hazy. I walked in a grove of orange trees, white with blossoms, and at the same time glowing with fruit. The spot sloped pleasantly toward the sea, and here I loitered till the horses were ready, then set off on the Appian, between hedges of myrtle and aloes. We observed a variety of towns, with battlemented walls and ancient turrets, crowning the pinnacles of rocky steeps, surrounded by wilds, and rude uncultivated mountains. The Liris, now Garigliano, winds its peaceful course through wide extensive meadows, scattered over with remains of aqueducts, and waters the base of the rocks I have just mentioned. Such a prospect could not fail of bringing Virgil's panegyric of Italy into my mind :

*Tot congesta manu præruptis oppida saxis
Fluminaque antiquos subter labentia muros.*

As soon as we arrived in sight of Capua, the sky darkened, clouds covered the horizon, and presently poured down such deluges of rain as floated the whole country. The gloom was general; Vesuvius disappeared just after we had discovered it. At four o'clock darkness universally prevailed, except when a livid glare of lightning presented momentary glimpses of the bay and mountains. We lighted torches, and forded several torrents almost at the hazard of our lives. The plains of Aversa were filled with herds, lowing most piteously, and yet not half so much scared as their masters, who ran about raving and ranting like Indians during the eclipse of the moon. I knew Vesu-

vius had often put their courage to proof, but little thought of an inundation occasioning such commotions.

For three hours the storm increased in violence, and instead of entering Naples on a calm evening, and viewing its delightful shores by moonlight — instead of finding the squares and terraces thronged with people and animated by music, we advanced with fear and terror through dark streets totally deserted, every creature being shut up in their houses, and we heard nothing but driving rain, rushing torrents, and the fall of fragments beaten down by their violence. Our inn, like every other habitation, was in great disorder, and we waited a long while before we could settle in our apartments with any comfort. All night the waves roared round the rocky foundations of a fortress beneath my windows, and the lightning played clear in my eyes.

November 4th.

Peace was restored to nature in the morning, but every mouth was full of the dreadful accidents which had happened in the night. The sky was cloudless when I awoke, and such was the transparence of the atmosphere that I could clearly discern the rocks, and even some white buildings on the island of Caprea, though at the distance of thirty miles. A large window fronts my bed, and its casements being thrown open, gives me a vast prospect of ocean uninterrupted, except by the peaks of Caprea and the Cape of Soreto. I lay half an hour gazing on the smooth level waters, and listening to the confused voices of the fishermen, passing and repassing in light skiffs, which came and disappeared in an instant.

Running to the balcony the moment my eyes were fairly open (for till then I saw objects, I know not how, as one does in dreams), I leaned over its rails and viewed Vesuvius, rising distinct into the blue æther, with all that world of gardens and casinos which are scattered about its base; then looked down into the street, deep below, thronged with people in holiday garments, and carriages, and sol-

diers in full parade. The shrubby, variegated shore of Posilipo drew my attention to the opposite side of the bay. It was on those very rocks, under those tall pines, San-nazaro was wont to sit by moonlight, or at peep of dawn, composing his marine eclogues. It is there he still sleeps; and I wished to have gone immediately and strewed coral over his tomb, but I was obliged to check my impatience and hurry to the palace in form and gala.

A courtly mob had got thither upon the same errand, daubed over with lace and most notably be-periwigged. Nothing but bows and salutations were going forward on the staircase, one of the largest I ever beheld, and which a multitude of prelates and friars were ascending with awkward pomposity. I jostled along to the presence-chamber, where his Majesty was dining alone in a circular enclosure of fine clothes and smirking faces. The moment he had finished, twenty long necks were poked forth, and it was a glorious struggle amongst some of the most decorated who first should kiss his hand, the great business of the day. Everybody pressed forward to the best of their abilities. His Majesty seemed to eye nothing but the end of his nose, which is doubtless a capital object.

Though people have imagined him a weak monarch, I beg leave to differ in opinion, since he has the boldness to prolong his childhood and be happy, in spite of years and conviction. Give him a boar to stab, and a pigeon to shoot at, a battledore or an angling rod, and he is better contented than Solomon in all his glory, and will never discover, like that sapient sovereign, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

His courtiers in general have rather a barbaric appearance, and differ little in the character of their physiognomies from the most savage nations. I should have taken them for Calmuchs or Samoieds, had it not been for their dresses and European finery.

You may suppose I was not sorry, after my presentation was over, to return to Sir W. H.'s, where an interesting group of lovely women, literati and artists, were assembled — Gagliani and Cyrillo, Aprile Milico, and Deamicis

— the determined Santo Marco, and the more nymphlike modest-looking, though not less dangerous, Belmonte. Gagliani happened to be in full story, and vied with his countryman Polichinello, not only in gesticulation and loquacity, but in the excessive licentiousness of his narrations. He was proceeding beyond all bounds of decency and decorum, at least according to English notions, when Lady H.* sat down to the pianoforte. Her plaintive modulations breathed a far different language. No performer that ever I heard produced such soothing effects; they seemed the emanations of a pure, uncontaminated mind, at peace with itself and benevolently desirous of diffusing that happy tranquillity around it; these were modes a Grecian legislature would have encouraged to further the triumph over vice of the most amiable virtue.

The evening was passing swiftly away, and I had almost forgotten there was a grand illumination at the theatre of St. Carlo. After traversing a number of dark streets, we suddenly entered this enormous edifice, whose seven rows of boxes one above the other blazed with tapers. I never beheld such lofty walls of light, nor so pompous a decoration as covered the stage. Marchesi was singing in the midst of all these splendours some of the poorest music imaginable, with the clearest and most triumphant voice, perhaps, in the universe.

It was some time before I could look to any purpose around me, or discover what animals inhabited this glittering world: such was its size and glare. At last I perceived vast numbers of swarthy ill-favoured beings, in gold and silver raiment, peeping out of their boxes. The court being present, a tolerable silence was maintained, but the moment his Majesty withdrew (which great event took place at the beginning of the second act) every tongue broke loose, and nothing but buzz and hubbub filled up the rest of the entertainment.

* This excellent and highly cultivated woman died at Naples in August, 1782. Had she lived to a later period, her example and influence might probably have gone great lengths towards arresting that tide of corruption and profligacy which swept off this ill-fated court to Sicily, and threatened its total destruction.

LETTER XXII.

View of the coast of Posilipo. — Virgil's tomb. — Superstition of the Neapolitans with respect to Virgil. — Aërial situation. — A grand scene.

November 6th, 1780.

Till to-day we have had nothing but rains; the sea covered with mists, and Caprea invisible. Would you believe it? I have not yet been able to mount to St. Elmo and the Capo di Monte, in order to take a general view of the town.

At length a bright gleam of sunshine summoned me to the broad terrace of Chiaja which commands the whole coast of Posilippo. Insensibly I drew towards it, and (you know the pace I run when out upon discoveries) soon reached the entrance of the grotto, which lay in dark shades, whilst the crags that lower over it were brightly illumined. Shrubs and vines grow luxuriantly in the crevices of the rock; and its fresh yellow colours, variegated with ivy, have a beautiful effect. To the right, a grove of pines spring from the highest pinnacles: on the left, bay and chesnut conceal the tomb of Virgil placed on the summit of a cliff which impends over the opening of the grotto, and is fringed with vegetation. Beneath are several wide apertures hollowed in the solid stone, which lead to caverns sixty or seventy feet in depth, where a number of peasants who were employed in quarrying, made a strange but not absolutely unharmonious din with their tools and their voices.

Walking out of the sunshine, I seated myself on a loose stone immediately beneath the first gloomy arch of the grotto, and looking down the long and solemn perspective terminated by a speck of grey uncertain light, venerated a work which some old chroniclers have imagined as ancient at the Trojan war. It was here the mysterious race of the Cimmerians performed their infernal rites,

and it was this excavation perhaps which let to their abode.

The Neapolitans attribute a more modern, though full as problematical an origin to their famous cavern, and most piously believe it to have been formed by the enchantments of Virgil, who, as Addison very justly observes, is better known at Naples in his magical character than as the author of the *Æneid*. This strange infatuation most probably arose from the vicinity of the tomb in which his ashes are supposed to have been deposited; and which, according to popular tradition, was guarded by those every spirits who assisted in constructing the cave. But whatever may have given rise to these ideas, certain it is they were not confined to the lower ranks alone. King Robert, * a wise though far from poetical monarch, conducted his friend Petrarch with great solemnity to the spot: and, pointing to the entrance of the grotto, very gravely asked him, whether he did not adopt the general belief, and conclude this stupendous passage derived its origin from Virgil's powerful incantations? The answer, I think, may easily be conjectured.

When I had sat for some time, contemplating this dusky avenue, and trying to persuade myself that it was hewn by the Cimmerians, I retreated without proceeding any farther, and followed a narrow path which led me, after some windings and turnings, along the brink of the precipice, across a vineyard, to that retired nook of the rocks which shelters Virgil's tomb, most venerably mossed over and more than half concealed by bushes and vegetation. The clown who conducted me remained aloof at awful distance, whilst I sat commercing with the manes of my beloved poet, or straggled about the shrubbery which hangs directly above the mouth of the grot.

Advancing to the edge of the rock, I saw crowds of people and carriages, diminished by distance, issuing from the bosom of the mountain and disappearing almost as soon as discovered in the windings of its road. Clam-

* *Mém. pour la vie de Pétrarque*, vol. I. p. 439.

bering high above the cavern, I hazarded my neck on the top of the pines, and looked contemptuously down on the race of pigmies that were so busily moving to and fro. The sun was fiercer than I could have wished, but the sea breezes fanned me in my aerial situation, which commanded the grand sweep of the bay, varied by convents, palaces, and gardens mixed with huge masses of rock, and crowned by the stately buildings of the Carthusians and fortress of St. Elmo. Add a glittering blue sea to this perspective, with Caprea rising from its bosom and Vesuvius breathing forth a white column of smoke into the æther, and you will then have a scene upon which I gazed with delight, for more than an hour, almost forgetting that I was perched upon the head of a pine with nothing but a frail branch to uphold me. However, I descended alive, as Virgil's genii, I am resolved to believe, were my protectors.

LETTER XXIII.

A ramble on the shore of Baii. — Local traditions. — Cross the bay. — Fragments of a temple dedicated to Hercules. — Wondrous reservoir constructed for the fleet of Nero. — The Dead Lake. — Wild scene. — Beautiful meadow. — Uncouth rocks. — An unfathomable gulph. — Sadness induced by the wild appearance of the place. — Conversation with a recluse. — Her fearful narration. — Melancholy evening.

November 8th, 1780.

This morning I awoke in the glow of sunshine — the air blew fresh and fragrant — never did I feel more elastic and enlivened. A brisker flow of spirits than I had for many a day experienced, animated me with a desire of rambling about the shore of Baii, and creeping into caverns and subterraneous chambers. Off I set along the Chiaja, and up strange paths which impend over the grotto of Posilipo, amongst the thickets mentioned a letter or two ago; for in my present buoyant humour I disdained ordinary roads, and would take paths and ways of

my own. A society of kids did not understand what I meant by intruding upon their precipices; and scrambling away, scattered sand and fragments upon the good people that were trudging along the pavement below.

I went on from pine to pine, and thicket to thicket, upon the brink of rapid declivities. My conductor, a shrewd savage, whom Sir William had recommended to me, cheered our route with stories that had passed in the neighbourhood, and traditions about the grot over which we were travelling. I wish you had been of the party, and sat down by us on little smooth spots of sward, where I reclined, scarcely knowing which way caprice had led me. My mind was full of the tales of the place, and glowed with a vehement desire of exploring the world beyond the grot. I longed to ascend the promontory of Misenus, and follow the same dusky route down which the Sibyl conducted Æneas.

With these dispositions I proceeded; and soon the cliffs and copses opened to views of the Baian sea with the little isles of Niscita and Lazaretto, lifting themselves out of the waters. Procita and Ischia appeared at a distance, invested with that purple bloom so inexpressibly beautiful, and peculiar to this fortunate climate. I hailed the prospect, and blessed the transparent air that gave me life and vigour to run down the rocks, and hie as fast as my savage across the plain to Pozzuoli. There we took bark, and rowed out into the blue ocean, by the remains of a sturdy mole: many such, I imagine, adorned the bay in Roman ages, crowned by vast lengths of slender pillars; pavilions at their extremities and taper cypresses spiring above their balustrades: this character of villa occurs very frequently in the paintings of Herculaneum.

We had soon crossed the bay, and landing on a bushy coast near some fragments of a temple which they say was raised to Hercules, advanced into the country by narrow tracks covered with moss and strewn with shining pebbles; to the right and left, broad masses of luxuriant foliage, chestnut, bay and ilex, that shelter the ruins of sepulchral chambers. No parties of smart Englishmen

and connoisseurs were about. I had all the land to myself, and mounted its steep and penetrated into its recesses, with the importance of a discoverer. What a variety of narrow paths, between banks and shades, did I wildly follow! my savage laughing loud at my odd gestures and useless activity. He wondered I did not scrape the ground for medals, and pocket little bits of plaster, like other inquisitive young travellers that had gone before me.

After ascending some time, I followed him into the wondrous * reservoir which Nero constructed to supply his fleet, when anchored in the neighbouring bay. A noise of trickling waters prevailed throughout this grand labyrinth of solid vaults and arches, that had almost lulled me to sleep as I rested myself on the celandine which carpets the floor; but curiosity urging me forward, I gained the upper air; walked amongst woods a few minutes, and then into grotts and dismal excavations (prisons they call them) which began to weary me.

After having gone up and down in this manner for some time, we at last reached an eminence that commanded the Mare Morto, and Elysian fields trembling with reeds and poplars. The Dead Lake, faithful emblem of eternal tranquillity, looked deep and solemn. A few peasants seemed fixed on its margin, their shadows reflected on the water. Turning from the lake, I espied a rock at about a league distant, whose summit was clad with verdure, and finding this to be the promontory of Misenus, I immediately set my face to that quarter.

We passed several dirty villages, inhabited by an ill-favoured generation, infamous for depredations and murders. Their gardens, however, discover some marks of industry; the fields are separated by neat hedges of cane, and a variety of herbs and pulses and Indian corn seemed to flourish in the inclosures. Insensibly we began to leave the cultivated lands behind us, and to lose ourselves in shady wilds, which, to all appearance, no mortal had

* The Piscina mirabilis.

ever trodden. Here were no paths, no inclosures; a primeval rudeness characterized the whole scene.

After forcing our way about a mile, through glades of shrubs and briars, we entered a lawn-like opening at the base of the cliff which takes its name from Misenus. The poets of the Augustan age would have celebrated such a meadow with the warmest raptures, and peopled its green expanse with all the sylvan demigods of their beautiful mythology. Here were springs issuing from rocks of pumice, and grassy hillocks partially concealed by thickets of bay.

*Et circum irriguo surgebant lilia prato
Candida purpureis mista papaveribus.*

But as it is not the lot of human animals to be contented, instead of reposing in the vale, I scaled the rock, and was three parts dissolved in attaining its summit. The sun darted upon my head, I wished to avoid its immediate influence; no tree was near; the pleasant valley lay below at a considerable depth, and it was a long way to descend to it. Looking round and round, I spied something like a hut, under a crag on the edge of a dark fissure. Might I avail myself of its covert? My conductor answered in the affirmative, and added that it was inhabited by a good old woman, who never refused a cup of milk, or slice of bread, to refresh a weary traveller.

Thirst and fatigue urged me speedily down an intervening slope of stunted myrtle. Though oppressed with heart, I could not help deviating a few steps from the direct path to notice the uncouth rocks which rose frowning on every quarter. Above the hut, their appearance was truly formidable, bristled over with sharpspired dwarf aloes, such as Lucifer himself might be supposed to have sown. Indeed I knew not whether I was not approaching some gate that leads to his abode, as I drew near a gulph (the fissure lately mentioned) and heard the deep hollow murmurs of the gusts which were imprisoned below. The savage, my guide, shuddered as he passed by to apprise

the old woman of my coming. I felt strangely, and stared around me, and but half liked my situation.

In the midst of my doubts, forth tottered the old woman. « You are welcome ; » said she, in a feeble voice, but a better dialect than I had heard in the neighbourhood. Her look was more humane, and she seemed of a superior race to the inhabitants of the surrounding valleys. My savage treated her with peculiar deference. She had just given him some bread, with which he retired to a respectful distance bowing to the earth. I caught the mode, and was very obsequious, thinking myself on the point of experiencing a witch's influence, and gaining, perhaps, some insight into the volume of futurity. She smiled at my agitation and kept beckoning me into the cottage.

« Now, » thought I to myself, « I am upon the verge of an adventure. » I saw nothing, however, but clay walls, a straw bed, some glazed earthen bowls, and a wooden crucifix. My shoes were loaded with sand : this my hostess perceived, and immediately kindling a fire in an inner part of the hovel, brought out some warm water to refresh my feet, and set some milk and chestnuts before me. This patriarchal attention was by no means indifferent after my tiresome ramble. I sat down opposite to the door which fronted the unfathomable gulph; beyond appeared the sea, of a deep cerulean, foaming with waves. The sky also was darkening apace with storms. Sadness came over me like a cloud, and, and I looked up to the old woman for consolation.

« And you too are sorrowful, young stranger, » said she, « that come from the gay world ! how must I feel, who pass year after year in these lonely mountains ? » I answered that the weather affected me, and my spirits were exhausted by the walk.

All the while I spoke she looked at me with such a melancholy earnestness that I asked the cause, and began again to imagine myself in some fatal habitation.

Where more in meant than meets the ear.

« Your features, » said she, « are wonderfully like those of an unfortunate young person, who, in this retirement. » The tears began to fall as she pronounced these words; my curiosity was fired. « Tell me, » continued I, « what you mean? who was this youth for whom you are so interested? and why did he seclude himself in this wild region? Your kindness to him might no doubt have alleviated, in some measure, the horrors of the place; but may God defend me from passing the night near such a gulph! I would not trust myself in a despairing moment. »

« It is, » said she, « a place of horrors. I tremble to relate what has happened on this very spot; but your manner interests me, and though I am little given to narration, for once I will unlock my lips concerning the secrets of yonder fatal chasm.

« I was born in a distant part of Italy, and have known better days. In my youth fortune smiled upon my family, but in a few years they withered away; no matter by what accident. I am not going to talk much of myself. Have patience a few moments! A series of unfortunate events reduced me to indigence, and drove me to this desert, where, from rearing goats and making their milk into cheese, by a different method than is common in the Neapolitan state, I have, for about thirty years, prolonged a sorrowful existence. My silent grief and constant retirement had made me appear to some a saint, and to others a sorceress. The slight knowledge I have of plants has been exaggerated, and some years back, the hours I gave up to prayer, and the recollection of former friends, lost to me for ever! were cruelly intruded upon by the idle and the ignorant. But soon I sank into obscurity: my little recipes were disregarded, and you are the first stranger who, for these twelve months past, has visited my abode. Ah, would to God its solitude had ever remained inviolate!

« It is now three-and-twenty years, » and she looked upon some characters cut on the planks of the cottage, « since I was sitting by moonlight, under that cliff you view, to the right, my eyes fixed on the ocean, my mind lost in the memory of my misfortunes, when I heard a step, and starting up, a figure stood before me. It was a young man, in a rich habit, with streaming hair, and looks that bespoke the utmost terror. I knew not what to think of this sudden apparition. « Mother, » said he with faltering accents, « let me rest under your roof; and deliver me not up to those who thirst after my blood. Take this gold; take all, all! »

« Surprise held me speechless; the purse fell to the ground; the youth stared wildly on every side: I heard many voices beyond the rocks; the wind bore them distinctly, but presently they died away. I took courage, and assured the youth my cot should shelter him. « Oh! thank you, thank you! » answered he, and pressed my hand. He shared my scanty provision.

« Overcome with toil (for I had worked hard in the day), sleep closed my eyes for a short interval. When I awoke, the moon was set, but I heard my unhappy guest sobbing in darkness. I disturbed him not. Morning dawned, and he was fallen into a slumber. The tears bubbled out of his closed eyelids, and coursed one another down his wan cheeks. I had been too wretched myself not to respect the sorrows of another: neglecting therefore my accustomed occupations, I drove away the flies that buzzed around his temples. His breast heaved high with sighs, and he cried loudly in his sleep for mercy.

» The beams of the sun dispelling his dream, he started up like one that had heard the voice of an avenging angel, and hid his face with his hands. I poured some milk down his parched throat. « Oh, mother!, he exclaimed, » I am a wretch unworthy of compassion; the cause of innumerable sufferings; a murderer! a parricide! My blood curdled to hear a stripling utter such dreadful words, and behold such agonising sighs swell in so young

a bosom ; for I marked the sting of conscience urging him to disclose what I am going to relate.

« It seems he was of high extraction, nursed in the pomps and luxuries of Naples, the pride and darling of his parents, adorned with a thousand lively talents, which the keenest sensibility conspired to improve. Unable to fix any bounds to whatever became the object of desires, he passed his first years in roving from one extravagance to another, but as yet there was no crime in his caprices.

« At length it pleased Heaven to visit his family, and make their idol the slave of an unbridled passion. He had a friend^c who from his birth had been devoted to his interest, and placed all his confidence in him. This friend loved to distraction a young creature, the most graceful of her sex (as I can witness), and she returned his affection. In the exultation of his heart, he showed her to the wretch whose tale I am about to tell. He sickened at her sight. She too caught fire at his glances. They languished — they consumed away — they conversed, and his persuasive language finished what his guilty glances had begun.

« Their flame was soon discovered, for he disdained to conceal a thought, however dishonourable. The parents warned the youth in the tenderest manner; but advice and prudent counsels were to him so loathsome, that unable to contain his rage, and infatuated with love, he menaced the life of his friend as the obstacle of his enjoyment. Coolness and moderation were opposed to violence and frenzy, and he found himself treated with a contemptuous gentleness. Stricken to the heart, he wandered about for some time like one entranced. Meanwhile, the nuptials were preparing, and the lovely girl he had perverted found ways to let him know she was about to be torn from his embraces.

« He raved like a demoniac, and rousing his dire spirit, applied to a malignant wretch who sold the most inveterate poisons. These he infused into a cup of pure iced water and presented to his friend, and to his own too fond confiding father, who soon after they had drunk

the fatal potion began evidently to pine away. He marked the progress of their dissoluteness with a horrid firmness, he let the moment pass beyond which all antidotes were vain. His friend expired; and the young criminal, though he beheld the dews of death hang on his parent's forehead, yet stretched not forth his hand. In a short space the miserable father breathed his last, whilst his son was sitting aloof in the same chamber.

« The sight overcame him. He felt, for the first time, the pangs of remorse. His agitations passed not unnoticed. He was watched: suspicious beginning to unfold; he took alarm, and one evening escaped; but not without previously informing the partner of his crimes which way he intended to flee. Several pursued; but the inscrutable will of Providence blinded their search, and I was doomed to behold the effects of celestial vengeance.

« Such are the chief circumstances of the tale I gathered from the youth. I swooned whilst he related it, and could take no sustenance. One whole day afterwards did I pray the Lord, that I might die rather than be near an incarnate demon. With what indignation did I now survey that slender form and those flowing tresses, which had interested me before so much in his behalf!

« No sooner did he perceive the change in my countenance, than sullenly retiring to yonder rock, he sat careless of the sun and scorching winds; for it was now the summer solstice. He was equally heedless of the unwholesome dews. When midnight came my horrors were augmented; and I meditated several times to abandon my hovel and fly to the next village; but a power more than human chained me to the spot and fortified my mind.

« I slept, and it was late next morning when some one called at the wicket of the little fold, where my goats are penned. I arose, and saw a peasant of my acquaintance leading a female strangely muffled up, and casting her eyes on the ground. My heart misgave me. I thought this was the very maid who had been the cause of such atrocious wickedness. Nor were my conjectures illfounded. Regardless of the clown who stood by in stupid as-

tonishment, she fell to the earth and bathed my hand with tears. Her trembling lips with difficulty enquired after the youth; and, as she spoke, a glow of conscious guilt lightened up her pale countenance.

« The full recollection of her lover's crimes shot through my memory. I was incensed, and would have spurned her away; but she clung to my garments and seemed to implore my pity with a look so full of misery, that, relenting, I led her in silence to the extremity of the cliff where the youth was seated, his feet dangling above the sea. His eye was rolling wildly around, but it soon fixed upon the object for whose sake he had doomed himself to perdition.

« Far be it from me to describe their ecstasies, or the eagerness with which they sought each other's embraces. I indignantly turned my head away; and, driving my goats to a recess amongst the rocks, sat revolving in my mind these strange events. I neglected procuring any provision for my unwelcome guests; and about midnight returned homewards by the light of the moon which shone serenely in the heavens. Almost the first object her beams discovered was the guilty maid sustaining the head of her lover, who had fainted through weakness and want of nourishment. I fetched some dry bread, and dipping it in milk laid it before them. Having performed this duty, I set open the door of my hut, and retiring to a neighbouring cavity, there stretched myself on a heap of leaves and offered my prayers to Heaven.

« A thousand fears, till this moment unknown, thronged into my fancy. The shadow of leaves that chequered the entrance to the grot, seemed to assume in my disordered imagination the form of ugly reptiles, and I repeatedly shook my garments. The flow of the distant surges was deepened by my apprehensions into distant groans: in a word, I could not rest; but issuing from the cavern as hastily as my trembling knees would allow, paced along the edge of the precipice. An unaccountable impulse would have hurried my steps, yet such was my terror and shivering, that unable to advance to my

hut or retreat to the cavern, I was about to shield myself from the night in a sandy crevice, when a loud shriek pierced my ear. My fears had confused me; I was in fact near my hovel and scarcely three paces from the brink of the cavern: it was thence the cries proceeded.

« Advancing in a cold shudder to its edge, part of which was newly crumbled in, I discovered the form of the young man suspended by one foot to a branch of juniper that grew several feet down: thus dreadfully did he hang over the gulph from the branch bending with his weight. His features were distorted, his eye-balls glared with agony, and his screams became so shrill and terrible that I lost all power of affording assistance. Fixed, I stood with my eyes riveted upon the criminal, who incessantly cried out, 'O God! O Father! save me if there be yet mercy! save me, or I sink into the abyss!' »

« I am convinced he did not see me; for not once did he implore my help. His voice grew faint, and as I gazed intent upon him, the loose thong of leather, which had entangled itself in the branches by which he hung suspended, gave way, and he fell into utter darkness. I sank to the earth in a trance; during which a sound like the rush of pennons assaulted my ear: methought the evil spirit was bearing off his soul; but when I lifted up my eyes nothing stirred; the stillness that prevailed was awful.

« The moon hanging low over the waves afforded a sickly light, by which I perceived some one coming down that white cliff you see before you; and I soon heard the voice of the young woman calling aloud on her guilty lover. She stopped. She repeated again and again her exclamation; but there was no reply. Alarmed and frantic she hurried along the path, and now I saw her on the promontory, and now by yonder pine, devouring with her glances every crevice in the rock. At length perceiving me, she flew to where I stood, by the fatal precipice, and having noticed the fragments fresh crumbled in, pored importunately on my countenance I continued pointing to the chasm; she trembled not; her tears

could not flow ; but she divined the meaning. 'He is lost !' said she ; 'the earth has swallowed him ! but , as I have shared with him the highest joy , so will I partake his torments. I will follow : dare not to hinder me.'

« Like the phantoms I have seen in dreams , she glanced beside me ; and , clasping her hands above her head , lifted a steadfast look on the hemisphere , and viewed the moon with an anxiousness that told me she was bidding it farewell for ever. Observing a silken handkerchief on the ground , with which she had but an hour ago bound her lover's temples , she snatched it up , and imprinting it with burning kisses , thrust it into her bosom. Once more , expanding her arms in the last act of despair and miserable passion , she threw herself , with a furious leap , into the gulph.

« To its margin I crawled on my knees , and there did I remain in the most dreadful darkness ; for now the moon was sunk , the sky obscured with storms , and a tempestuous blast ranging the ocean. Showers poured thick upon me , and the lightning , in clear and frequent flashes , gave me terrifying glimpses of yonder accursed chasm.

« Stranger , dost thou believe in our Redeemer ? in his most holy mother in the tenets of our faith ?" I answered with reverence , but said her faith and mine were different. « Then ," continued the aged woman , « I will not declare before a heretic what were the visions of that night of vengeance !" She paused ; I was silen.

After a short interval , with deep and frequent sighs , she resumed her narrative. « Daylight began to dawn as if with difficulty , and it was late before its radiance had tinged the watery and tempestuous clouds. I was still kneeling by the gulph in prayer when the cliffs began to brighten , and the beams of the morning sun to strike against me. Then did I rejoice. Then no longer did I think myself of all human beings the most abject and miserable. How different did I feel myself from those , fresh plunged into the abodes of torment , and driven for ever from the morning !

« Three days elapsed in total solitude : on the fourth ,

some grave and ancient persons arrived from Naples, who questioned me, repeatedly, about the wretched lovers, and to whom I related their fate with every dreadful particular. Soon after I learned that all discourse concerning them was expressly stopped, and that no prayers were offered up for their souls."

With these words, as well as I recollect, the old woman ended her singular narration. My blood thrilled as I walked by the gulph to call my guide, who stood aloof under the cliffs. He seemed to think, from the paleness of my countenance, that I had heard some gloomy prediction, and shook his head, when I turned round to bid my old hostess adieu! It was a melancholy evening, and I could not refrain from tears, whilst, winding through the defiles of the rocks, the sad scenes which had passed amongst them recurred to my memory.

Traversing a wild thicket, we soon regained the shore, where I rambled a few minutes whilst the peasant went for the boatmen. The last streaks of light were quivering on the waters when I stepped into the bark, and wrapping myself up in an awning, slept till we reached Puzoli, some of whose inhabitants came forth with torches to light us home.

LETTER XXIV.

The Tyrol Mountains. — Intense cold. — Delight on beholding human habitations.

Augsburg, 20 th January, 1781.

For these ten days past have I been traversing Lapland: winds whistling in my ears, and cones showering down upon my head from the wilds of pine through which our route conducted us. We were often obliged to travel by moonlight, and I leave you to imagine the awful aspect of the Tyrol mountains buried in snow.

I scarcely ventured to utter an exclamation of surprise, though prompted by some of the most striking scenes in

nature, lest I should interrupt the sacred silence that prevails, during winter, in these boundless solitudes. The streams are frozen, and mankind petrified, for aught I know to the contrary, since whole days have we journeyed on without perceiving the slightest hint of their existence.

I never before felt so much pleasure by discovering a smoke rising from a cottage, or hearing a heifer lowing in its stall; and could not have supposed there was so much satisfaction in perceiving two or three fur caps, with faces under them, peeping out of their concealments. I wish you had been with me, exploring this savage region: wrapped up in our bear-skins; we should have followed its secret avenues, and penetrated, perhaps, into some enchanted cave lined with furs, where, like the heroes of northern romances, we should have been waited upon by dwarfs, and sung drowsily to repose. I think it no bad scheme to sleep away five or six years to come, since every hour affairs are growing more and more turbulent. Well, let them! provided we may enjoy, in security, the shades of our thickets.

SECOND VISIT TO ITALY.

LETTER I.*

First day of Summer. — A dismal Plain. — Gloomy entrance to Cologne. — Labyrinth of hideous edifices. — Hotel of Der Heilige Geist.

Cologne, 28th May, 1792.

This is the first day of summer; the oak leaves expand the roses blow, butterflies are on the wing, and I have spirits enough

* The following letters, written during a second excursion, are added, on account of their affinity to some of the preceding.

to write to you. We have had clouded skies this fortnight past, and roads like the stough of Despond. Last Wednesday we were benighted on a dismal plain, apparently boundless. The moon cast a sickly gleam, and now and then a blue meteor glided along the morass which lay before us.

After much difficulty we gained an avenue, and in an hour's time discovered something like a gateway, shaded by crooked elms and crowned by a cluster of turrets. Here we paused and knocked; no one answered. We repeated our knocks; the gate returned a hollow sound; the horses coughed, their riders blew their horns. At length the bars fell, and we entered — by what means I am ignorant, for no human being appeared.

A labyrinth of narrow winding streets, dark as the vaults of a cathedral, opened to our view. We kept wandering along, at least twenty minutes, between lofty mansions with grated windows and strange galleries projecting one over another, from which depended innumerable uncouth figures and crosses, in ironwork, swinging to and fro with the wind. At the end of this gloomy maze we found a long street, not fifteen feet wide, I am certain; the houses still loftier than those just mentioned, the windows thicker barred, and the gibbets (for I know not what else to call them) more frequent. Here and there we saw lights glimmering in the highest stories, and arches on the right and left, which seemed to lead into retired courts and deeper darkness.

Along one of these recesses we were jumbled, over such pavement as I hope you may never tread upon; and, after parading round it, went out at the same arch through which we had entered. This procession seemed at first very mystical, but it was too soon accounted for by our postillions, who confessed they had lost their way. A council was held amongst them in form, and then we struck into another labyrinth of hideous edifices, habitations I will not venture to call them, as not a creature stirred; though the rumbling of our carriages was echoed by all the vaults and arches.

Towards midnight we rested a few minutes, and a head poking out of a casement directed us to the hotel of Der Heilige Geist, where an apartment, thirty feet square, was prepared for our reception.

LETTER II.

Enter the Tirol. — Picturesque scenery. — Village of Nassariet. — World of boughs. — Forest huts. — Floral abundance.

Inspruck, June 4, 1782.

No sooner had we passed Fuessen than we entered the Tyrol, a country of picturesque wonders. Those lofty peaks, those steep

of wood I delight in, lay before us. Innumerable clear springs gushed out on every side, overhung by luxuriant shrubs in blossom. The day was mild, though overcast, and a soft blue vapour rested upon the hills, above which rise mountains that bear plains of snow into the clouds.

At night we lay at Nassariet, a village buried amongst savage promontories. The next morning we advanced, in bright sunshine, into smooth lawns on the slopes of mountains, scattered over with larches, whose delicate foliage formed a light green veil to the azure sky. Flights of birds were merrily travelling from spray to spray. I ran delighted into this world of boughs, whilst Coxe sat down to draw the huts which are scattered about for the shelter of herds, and discover themselves amongst the groves in the most picturesque manner.

These little edifices are uncommonly neat, and excite those ideas of pastoral life to which I am so fondly attached. The turf from whence they rise is enamelled, in the strict sense of the word, with flowers. Gentians predominated, brighter than ultramarine; here and there auriculas looked out of the moss, and I often reposed upon tufts of ranunculus. Bushes of phillyrea were very frequent, the sun shining full on their glossy leaves. An hour passed away swiftly in these pleasant groves, where I lay supine under a lofty fir, a tower of leaves and branches.

LETTER III.

Rapidity of our drive along the causeways of the Brenta.— Shore of Fusina.— A Stormy sky.— Draw near to Venice.— Its deserted appearance.— Visit to Madame de R.-Cesarotti.

Padua, June 14th, 1782.

Once more, said I to myself, I shall have the delight of beholding Venice; so got into an open chaise, the strangest cufricle that ever man was jolted in, and drove furiously along the causeways by the Brenta, into whose deep waters it is a mercy, methinks, I was not precipitated. Fiesco, the Dolo, the Mira, with all their gardens, statues, and palaces, seemed flying after each other, so rapid was our motion.

After a few hours' confinement between close steeps, the scene opened to the wide shore of Fusina. I looked up (for I had scarcely time to look before) and beheld a troubled sky, shot with vivid red, the Lagunes tinted like the opal, and the islands of a glowing flame-colour. The mountains of the distant continent appeared of a deep melancholy grey, and innumera-

ble gondolas were passing to and fro in all their blackness. The sun, after a long struggle, was swallowed up in the tempestuous clouds.

In an hour we drew near to Venice, and saw its world of domes rising out of the waters. A fresh breeze bore the toll of innumerable bells to my ear. Sadness came over me as I entered the great canal, and recognised those solemn palaces, with their lofty arcades and gloomy arches, beneath which I had so often sat, the scene of many a strange adventure.

The Venetians being mostly at their villas on the Brenta, the town appeared deserted. I visited, however, all my old haunts in the place of St. Mark, ran up the Campanile, and rowed backwards and forwards, opposite the Ducal Place, by moonlight. They are building a spacious quay, near the street of the Sclavonians, fronting the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, where I remained alone at least an hour, following the wanderings of the moon amongst mountainous clouds, and listening to the waters dashing against marble steps.

I closed my evening at my friend Madame de Rosenberg's, where I met Cesarotti, who read to us some of the most affecting passages in his *Fingal*, with all the intensity of a poet, thoroughly persuaded that into his own bosom the very soul of Ossian had been transfused.

Next morning the wind was uncommonly violent for the mild season of June, and the canals much ruffled; but I was determined to visit the Lido once more, and bathe on my accustomed beach. The pines in the garden of the Carthusians were nodding as I passed by in my gondola, which was very poetically buffeted by the waves.

Traversing the desert of locusts, * I hailed the Adriatic, and plunged into its agitated waters. The sea, delightfully cool, refreshed me to such a degree, that, upon my return to Venice. I found myself able to thread its labyrinths of streets, canals, and alleys, in search of amber and oriental curiosities. The variety of exotic merchandise, the perfume of coffee, the shade of awnings, and the sight of Greeks and Asiatics sitting cross-legged under them, made me think myself in the bazaars of Constantinople.

It is certain my beloved town of Venice ever recalls a series of eastern ideas and adventures. I cannot help thinking St. Mark's a mosque, and the neighbouring palace some vast seraglio, full of arabesque saloons, embroidered sofas, and voluptuous Circasians.

* See letter VII.

LETTER IV.

*Excursion to Mirabello. — Beauty of the road thither. —
Madame de R.'s wild-looking niece. — A comfortable
Monk's nest.*

Padua, June 19th, 1782.

The morning was delightful, and St. Antony's bells in full chime. A shower which had fallen in the night rendered the air so cool and grateful, that Madame de R. and myself determined to seize the opportunity and go to Mirabello, a country house, which Algarotti had inhabited, situated amongst the Euganean hills, eight or nine miles from Padua.

Our road lay between poplar alleys and fields of yellow corn, overhung by garlands of vine, most beautifully green. I soon found myself in the midst of my favourite hills, upon slopes covered with clover, and shaded by cherry trees. Bending down their boughs, I gathered the fruit, and grew cooler and happier every instant.

We dined very comfortably in a strange hall, where my friend's little wild-looking niece pitched her pianoforte, and sang the voluptuous airs of Bertoni's Armida. That enchantress might have raised her palace in this situation; and, had I been Rinaldo, I certainly should not very soon have abandoned it.

After dinner we drank coffee under some branching lemons, which sprang from a terrace, commanding a boundless scene of towers and villas; tall cypresses and shrubby hillocks rising, like islands, out of a sea of corn and wine.

Evening drawing on, and the breeze blowing fresh from the distant Adriatic, I reclined on a slope, and turned my eyes anxiously towards Venice; then upon some little fields hemmed in by chestnuts, where the peasants were making their hay, and, from thence, to a mountain, crowned by a circular grove of fir and cypress.

In the centre of these shades some monks have a comfortable nest; perennial springs, a garden of delicious vegetables, and, I dare say, a thousand luxuries besides, which the poor mortals below never dream of.

Had it not been late, I should certainly have climbed up to the grove, and asked admittance into its recesses; but having no mind to pass the night in this eyrie, I contented myself with the distant prospect.

LETTER V.

Rome. — Stroll to the Coliseo and the Palatine Mount. — A grand Rinfresco. — The Egyptian Lionesses. — Illuminations.

Rome, 29 th June, 1782.

It is needless for me to say I wish you with me: you know I do; you know how delightfully we should ramble about Rome together. This evening, instead of parading the Corso with the puppets in blue and silver coats, and green and gold coaches, instead of bowing to Cardinal this, and dotting my head to Abbé t'other, I strolled to the Coliseo and scrambled amongst its arches. Then bending my course to the Palatine Mount, I passed under the Arch of Titus, and gained the Capitol, which was quite deserted, the world, thank Heaven, being all slipslopping in coffee-houses, or staring at a few painted boards, patchep up before the Colonna palace, where, by the by, to-night is a grand *rinfresco* for all the dolls and doll-fanciers of Rome. I heard their buzz at a distance; that was enough for me!

Soothed by the rippling of waters, I descended the Capitoline stairs, and leaned several minutes against one of the Egyptian lionesses. This animal has un knak at oracles, or else it would have murmured out to me the situation of that secret cave, where the wolf suckled Romulus and his brother.

About nine, I returned home, and am now writing to you like a prophet on the housetop. Behind me rustle the thickets of the Villa Medici; before, lies roof beyond roof, and dome beyond dome: these are dimly discovered; but do not you see the great cupola of cupolas, twinkling with illuminations? The town is real, I am certain; but, surely, that structure of fire must be visionary.

LETTER VI.

The Negroni Garden. — Its solitary and antique appearance. — Stately Porticos of the Lateran. — Dreary Scene.

Rome, 30th June, 1782.

As soon as the sun declined I strolled into the Villa Medici; but finding it haunted by pompous people, nay, even by the Spanish Ambassador, and several red-legged Cardinals, I moved off to the

Negroni garden. There I found what my soul desired, thickets of jasmine, and wild spots overgrown with bay; long alleys of cypress totally neglected, and almost impassable through the luxuriance of the vegetation; on every side antique fragments, vases, sarcophagi, and altars sacred to the Manes in deep, shady recesses, which I am certain the Manes must love. The air was filled with the murmurs of water, trickling down basins of porphyry, and losing itself amongst overgrown weeds and grasses.

Above the wood and between its boughs appeared several domes, and a strange lofty tower. I will not say they belong to St. Maria Maggiore; no, they are fanes and porticos dedicated to Cybele, who delights in sylvan situations. The forlorn air of this garden, with its high and reverend shades, make me imagine it as old as the baths of Dioclesian, which peep over one of its walls.

At the close of day, I repaired to the platform before the stately porticos of the Lateran. There I sat, folded up in myself. Some priests jarred the iron gates behind me. I looked over my shoulder through the portals, into the portico. Night began to fill it with darkness. Upon turning round, the melancholy waste of the Campagna met my eyes, and I wished to go home, but had scarcely the power. A pressure, like that I have felt in horrid dreams, seemed to fix me to the pavement.

I was thus in a manner forced to dwell upon the dreary scene, the long line of aqueducts and lonesome towers. Perhaps the unwholesome vapours, rising like blue mists from the plains, had affected me. I know not how it was; but I never experienced such strange, such chilling terrors. About ten o'clock, thank God, the spell dissolved, found my limbs at liberty, and returned home.

LETTER VII.

Naples. — Portici. — The King's Pagliaro and Garden. — Description of that pleasant spot.

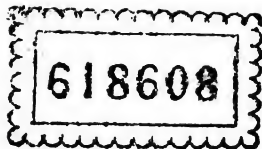
Naples, July 3th, 1782.

The sea-breezes restore me to life. I set the heat of mid day at defiance, and do not believe in the horrors of the sirocco. I passed yesterday at Portici, with Lady H. The morning, refreshing and pleasant, invited us at an early hour into the open air. We drove, in an uncovered chaise, to the royal Boschetto: no other un-royal carriage except Sir W'.s being allowed to enter its alleys, we breathed a fresh air, untainted by dust or garlick. Every now and then, amidst wild bushes of ilex and myrtle, one finds a graceful antique statue, sometimes a fountain, and often a rude knoll, where the rabbits sit undisturbed, contemplating the blue glittering bay.

The walls of this shady inclosure are lined with Peruvian aloes, whose white blossoms, scented like those of the magnolia, form the most magnificent clusters. They are plants to salute respectfully as one passes by; such is their size and dignity. In the midst of the thickets stands the King's Pagliaro, in a small garden, with hedges of luxuriant jasmine, whose branches are suffered to flaunt as much as nature pleases.

The morning sun darted his first rays on their flowers just as I entered this pleasant spot. The hut looks as if erected in the days of fairy pastoral life; its neatness is quite delightful. Bright tiles compose the floor; straw, nicely platted, covers the walls. In the middle of the room you see a table spread with a beautiful Persian carpet; at one end, four niches with mattresses of silk, where the King and his favourites repose after dinner; at the other, a white marble basin. Mount a little staircase, and you find yourself in another apartment, formed by the roof, which being entirely composed of glistening straw, casts that comfortable yellow glow I admire. From the windows you look into the garden, not flourished over with parterres, but divided into plats of fragrant herbs and flowers, with here and there a little marble table, or basin of the purest water.

These sequestered inclosures are cultivated with the greatest care, and so frequently watered, that I observed lettuces, and a variety of other vegetables, as fresh as in our green England.]



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